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AND

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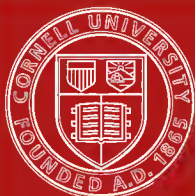
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OLD WAYS AND NEW



OLD WAYS AND NEW

STORIES

BY

VIOLA ROSEBORO'



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TO MY MOTHER,
MY EARLIEST AND STILL MY BEST
COMPANION IN THE BLESSED
WORLD OF LETTERS, I WISH TO
INSCRIBE THIS, MY FIRST BOOK.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I THE CLOWN AND THE MISSIONARY	1
II BENTLEY'S SYSTEM	19
III A JEST OF FATE	48
IV THE LAST MARCHBANKS	75
V THE REIGN OF REASON	95
VI NANNIE'S CAREER	117
VII THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE	133
VIII RUDOLPH	149
IX THE VILLAGE ALIEN	164
X THE GIRL AND THE PROBLEM	191

THE CLOWN AND THE MISSIONARY.



It was a sunny May morning, and the *Baltic* was steaming out of New York bay for Liverpool. It was the old ship's last trip in these waters, and she made it under special conditions. She was given up entirely to second-class passengers, who of course, as a result, had in some respects first-class accommodations. The consequence was a social mixture perhaps a shade odder and more varied than is usually seen. Two weeks before, my friend Miss Milman had happened to see this arraangement advertised, and we had suddenly and happily discovered that at the rates given we could afford to drop work (our painting and writing) for a month or two and together "run over to the other side."

We were on deck in that May sunshine, our hands full of flowers,—for our friends had graciously ignored our lowly second-class estate in their farewells,—the bright waters dancing around us, the workaday world behind us, enchanted lands of romance and beauty before us, and at our elbows a new and heterogeneous representation of the dear, dull, supremely interesting

human race. By the time we had spent an eternity of two days in a universe of water and sky, we had discovered beneath the prevailingly commonplace exteriors various pleasing features among our fellow-passengers. The Irish ward politician's obvious moral heinousness, taken together with his tender devotion to a little sick wife, gave us an enjoyable incongruity; we relished the simple and profound moral patronage we received from a trio of professional feminine philanthropists, well-meaning souls, dripping with self-esteem, who were going over to investigate the workings of some society for the promotion of some sort of good works; we delighted in their genuine horror of a stunning, bouncing, good-looking young woman who was said to be an actress, but whose normal position, it was perfectly clear, was at the head of a column of lightly-clad Amazons in a Kiralfy spectacle, and we liked her as a perfect specimen of her kind; but we had most pleasure in the simple admiration and respect we felt for a shabby, gentle, intelligent missionary from China, who was on his way to a great Exeter Hall meeting in London, and in the curiosity aroused in us by a dumb, wooden youth with watery, pale eyes and a red head, who looked rough and "horsey," and whom we repeatedly saw sitting in his state-room—it was opposite ours—reading a small Bible.

We thought it piquant when we found he knew the spectacular Amazon, but that was but the beginning of satisfactions, for we soon discovered that he was himself a circus clown.

To look upon a little dull, faithful-looking creature like that, to see him absorbed in reading a pocket

edition of the Holy Scriptures, and to be able to reflect that he lived by the violent vivacities of a sawdust buffoon, was a privilege that, among other things, made me laugh till I cried. Perhaps the step from the one expression to the other was shorter than usual.

The sight of him gave me new thoughts as to the possible value of rites, of formal observances. There was nothing in his aspect as he read to suggest keen intellectual or spiritual activity; on the contrary, I could imagine him turning two leaves at once and being never the wiser—or the less wise. The occasion was plainly one of ceremony, but it was equally plain that it was ceremony observed with religious feeling, and without going into the gloomy question of how far religious feeling may be removed from a sense of moral obligations, I felt very sure to such a boy as this, English or American, and unflattered by the public opinion of his world, the ceremony of Bible reading was morally conserving.

The third day out I did a highly reprehensible thing. I had seen the clown on deck as I came down to my state-room, and when near the open door of his I saw the Bible lying on one of the theatrical trunks with which the place was filled. The temptation was irresistible. I took it up and opened it at the front fly-leaf. Yes, there was the inscription in a half-formed, school-girlish Italian hand—American school-girls wrote something like it forty years ago:

To my Beloved Brother Teddy, from his loving Sister Emmy.
Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

I called softly to Amy, and held up the page.

"How could you be such a br —" "Brute," she was going to call me, but she stopped to avail herself of my misconduct and to read the words, and then we laid the book where I had found it and slipped away.

"Yes," she said, as we exchanged a look and a smile, "it would have been a pity to miss that because of any small scruples. And now you 'd better stop; a little circus clown traveling over the earth like that is too picturesque an object for investigation. He 'll never come up to the situation."

I thought she was probably right; still my curiosity was not slaked.

During the several years spent by myself "on the stage" I had occasionally come in touch with circus people. To some extent they recruit the stage, and though actors affect a great superiority, there is a degree of common understanding, and, on occasion, of good-fellowship between all show folks. I consider myself to hold rather originally favorable opinions of the sawdust performers as compared to other nomads, but I am not accustomed to see religion flourish among any such class, except, semi-occasionally, in the case of Roman Catholics. One effect of Puritanism on Protestantism has been to unfit it for many Christ-like ministrations which the old church still better or worse performs. It was the loneliness of the little clown's religious aspirations that touched me most. I reflected on how many good people would be disconcerted to hear of them, on how many would feel that in some mysterious way such aspirations most irritatingly and unjustly weakened their own position of condemna-

tion toward clowns and circuses in particular, and the world, the flesh, and the devil at large.

I smiled at the thought. I was lying on deck in my steamer-chair, and just then the captain of the Amazons, in much nautical splendor of blue serge and white anchors, whirled down the deck and collided in front of me with the shabby missionary.

The girl turned pale. It was pleasing to see the awe with which the cloth inspired her; in the confusion of her apologies she dropped a pack of cards. The missionary picked them up, and with a kindly, faintly humorous smile handed them to her, and she got herself off expeditiously, though, so to speak, with much sail taken in.

It occurred to me that perhaps this preacher did not illustrate the points I had been making against the pious. We had arrived at a bowing acquaintance, the missionary and I, and now when he glanced my way I smiled my recognition of the moment's accident. He smiled, too, and said, "When I first went to China I found that for the work I wanted to do I must dress like a Chinaman." The conclusion of his thought, that the clerical broadcloth might still interfere with his usefulness, he expressed only by a quizzical glance down the deck toward the young lady whose normal costume was tights.

Later in the long, fair, ocean-girt day, as the ship glided on between two still, blue wonderworlds,—the water was like satin,—Amy brought her water-color box on deck and began to sketch.

Everybody was on deck; the clown, with a white, bell-shaped soft hat pulled down to his ears, and his

hands in his pockets, was doggedly taking a constitutional and chewing a toothpick.

I was planning to use my past connection with the stage to help me to his acquaintance, when it appeared that we were to win that privilege through a quite different appeal. As I lay, drowsy with content, watching the dashes of color brighten Amy's pad, I became aware that Teddy Catty (that was his delightful name) was circling about us, his pale, white-lashed little eyes blinking fixedly — if you will permit the paradox — upon Amy's work.

I looked up at him amicably as he came nearer. He touched his hat; there was a touch of the grotesque, something clownish, in his very organization, and the way he touched his hat was faintly funny, was dimly Audrey-like. He came nearer shyly, cleared his throat, and said, with a very good accent and in quite the usual English way:

"Beg pardon, I hope you'll excuse me for watching, but I take such an interest when I see any one painting."

"Do you paint?" I concluded my reply.

"Oh, no, no, no, indeed, but I have a sister who does. She paints wonderfully." Then, lowering his voice, he added hesitatingly, as if it were really inmodest to speak of so much glory, "She has a picture in the Royal Academy this year."

Now this was exactly what I wanted to hear about. Amy was painting away; she had recognized the clown's presence by a civil glance only, so I encouraged him to draw up a stool and wait till her sketch was done.

I soon learned much of the little all that my week's acquaintance with him disclosed. The sight of a girl painting had melted him into a mood as communicative as a child's, and he only wanted a sympathetic audience to enjoy with him the music of Emmy's name. Yes, the heroine of the Royal Academy and the dear giver of the little Bible were one—she was Teddy Catty's only sister.

Let me give such an outline of their history as I can, in orderly sequence.

The father had been in charge of the workroom of a china-painting firm. "That's all knocked off now," said Teddy Catty; and he explained lamely and naïvely how people wanted "high art" nowadays, and how consequently his father's old firm had gone out of business; his father had been with it forty years, and "he died pretty soon after he lost his place."

The mother had been a ballet-girl before she married, and she had numbers of relatives in various branches of the "show business." The children, four of them, were all put on the stage in pantomimes and such things when they were little. Of the family there were now left only the one brother and sister.

No, Emmy was not on the stage, "not in no way." Though his accent was so good the little clown's grammar was not upon a dull level of correctness. "Emmy never exactly liked the stage, her mother never exactly wanted her to go on it," and just when they did not know what she should do, she solved the problem the old way, and married,—married a scene-painter at the Lyceum Theater.

"You may know by that that he's a good one; he

was only in a small position when Emmy married him, but he's one of the head ones now. Then, you know, he knew some real artist painters, and Emmy,—she did n't have any children,—and she thought she 'd like to learn to paint pictures; and she did. Her husband's awful proud of her."

It was the fifth day out, when, after much narrative that—as is the way of talk—did not advance the story, we reached this point.

We were again on deck, and Amy and I were lying in our chairs gazing over a tossing dark sea at a red sunset, while Teddy Catty sat facing us.

"You would n't think Emmy was my sister," he said. "She's like another kind. She's a beauty, and she's just like a swell, a nice swell, in her ways, and then she's good. My, she's good!"

"Is she religious?" I ventured.

"Now you know,—yes,—but then it's hard to say exactly what different people mean," and the boy gave himself up with grave pleasure to the serious business of accurately informing us as to Emmy's spiritual life. "She is as religious as she can be one way," he went on, "and then the other she only goes as far as she can without feeling as if she was throwing over the rest of us. Her husband he thinks religious people ain't his kind, and of course I'm nowhere with 'em, and Emmy can't make herself up to contract with them that despises us. You would n't believe what she thinks of me, you would n't indeed. So she just goes without religion except what she can get reading the Bible and—" half hesitating, and softening his tone—"and praying. She says she believes we can be good that way. She

wants me to try. She is—good, good. I wish, though, she could be with real religious people, some kind. Our grandmother, one of 'em, was a great chapel-goer. She was an Independent. I think Emmy would be happier that way."

He turned his face toward the angry gloom of the sea and the fading western sky, and we were all silent. What a comforting glimpse of human nature! What a touching, beautiful hint of human history in that disorderly Bohemian world was this the clown had given us! Not typical, perhaps, of anything less than the deep heart of man, but none the less typical of that because of its irrational, incongruous, half-comic setting.

Presently Amy said, with an odd little accession of formal courtesy in her tone, "I hope, Mr. Catty, you have a picture of your sister that you can show us. I should like to know how she looks."

Yes, he had her picture in his state-room; he wanted us to see it.

The limitless night was darkening around us in momentary pulsations; we left the wild, soul-searching scene for the petty, pretty glare of the cabin. While we were drinking our tea, Teddy Catty brought us the photograph.

It seemed out of harmony now with the fleshly reaction from the infinite things of the spirit that had just come upon us; we had to give our poor flagging souls a tug to make them respond to the unconscious awe that looked, Madonna-like, upon us. You never saw a little child's face more deeply, simply serious. And yet—I find myself saying "and yet"—it was of the

most typical, modern London sort, with delicate, high, regular features, flat cheeks, and strong, smooth structural lines — beautiful, but with an over-civilized, sophisticated beauty curiously at variance with the pure, tender goodness of the expression, and, in some obscure way, making it the more touching.

The next day I took the picture to show to the missionary. He smiled benevolently as I told of the quaint brother and sister, but being a missionary and not an artist, and seeing nothing to do for them, his mind inclined to wander. Yet once or twice afterward, as he walked the deck with one of his small children by the hand,—he always had one with him when he did not have two,—he tried to join in our conversation with Teddy Catty; but when he saw the little fellow draw back overawed, he readily enough, with a shade of relief, perhaps, abandoned the gentle attack.

This trio was not often in session, so to say, for Teddy Catty was very modest, and was scrupulously careful not to intrude upon us; but he was sure to be within beckoning distance whenever Amy was sketching. The sight exercised an absurd fascination upon him.

It was easy to see that he regarded me as of an altogether inferior race of beings as compared to Amy; with me he could talk on occasion, but to her he could scarcely more than speak when he was spoken to. This dumb shyness, together with his professional position, puzzled Amy.

“Do you suppose,” said she, “that he is anything of a clown, that honest little owl?”

In truth there seemed nothing clown-like about

Teddy Catty except the clownishness of which I have spoken, the touch of oddity that made his identity seem a little humorous. But then I had seen successful comedians flourish on nothing more than a lesser degree of the same thing, and I knew too, what is always puzzling to the world, that the possession of the technique of any art enables the possessor to mold into expression much of his nature which he may lack either freedom, will, or desire to express in his life; so you see I was not surprised when my interest in Teddy Catty's artistic side was gratified by a chance verdict—but not a worthless one—that he was a good clown. It came from the spectacular Amazonian captain on the occasion of my first conversation with her. It happened one afternoon, as I was walking on deck, that I stumbled, and simultaneously the ship gave a lurch, and I was thrown upon the histrionic Amazonian breast. Upon such a provocation to unreasoning resentment her boundless good nature instantly asserted itself, with pleasure in the opportunity, and then in an instant more she realized another opportunity—she would gratify a thirst for knowledge. Having helped me to my feet, she hurried to say:

“I've heard Teddy Catty speak about you; he said you've been on the stage yourself. He's awful taken up seeing that friend of yours paint, ain't he? He's dead proud of that sister of his a-painting. Did you know anything about him before you came on board? Did n't you ever see him in the ring? He's a good clown, a real good one. They say he'll get with Barnum next, likely. There's some fun to him—not all just as if you'd pulled a string. I tell him

he ought to go on the stage—comic opera. He can't sing much, but that don't matter for a funny man. I 've been in comic opera some, not a principal of course—but I can get more with the Kiralfys and in pantomime over here," with a toss of the head toward the bow of the ship.

After having dreamed away half a lifetime in this little world upon the waters, and having all but forgotten previous states of existence,—at the end of ten days, that is,—we anchored off Queenstown. There, according to expectation, we met a party of pleasant acquaintances of both sexes, and straightway we sank—rose?—were transformed from the lofty epicene patrons of Teddy Catty into something perhaps more like conventional young ladies than some old-fashioned people would suppose possible.

It is strange now to think how unimpressively on this changed mood fell the news that Teddy Catty at Queenstown had met dark sorrow—a letter had come telling him his sister was dead. Not that we were indifferent. No; I remember feeling his bereavement with one of those appalling thumps of realization that visit most of us often enough to point the blessing of our usual "wadding of stupidity." But, after all, this heart-stopping sensation—as usual, I think—came rather from a sudden vision of the tragic conditions of all life than from direct, simple sympathy with Teddy Catty. Poor Teddy Catty had all at once become a very remote little figure, all but invisible, and there was so much to talk over with our friends: news was to be heard, experiences were to be exchanged, and plans to be made—a sudden develop-

ment for us of a full world out of nebulous space. Still, in the midst of all this pleasant pother we could but gaze upon the door that shut in the little clown and his sorrow, and feel momentarily rebuked for life and its inevitable frivolities.

It was a relief when his room-mate, a young man—we knew nothing more about him—came to me, and with stammering, misplaced apologies asked if I thought, if I supposed, that the missionary would not mind, or did I think he would mind—"Does Mr. Catty want to see the missionary?" I asked, with a sense of relief; and I went gladly to summon him.

The missionary was, as usual, occupied with his numerous little ones; his wife had been sick throughout the voyage, and had scarcely left her state-room.

He turned his bowed head a little from me as he listened, as if he were steeling himself against a personal misfortune.

"He begins where we leave off," I said to myself, as I looked upon his pity-moved face.

He came back to me after he had taken the children to his wife, and said, "If I can comfort this poor boy through the word and love of my Master,—there is no other comfort,—I 'll not forget it 's to you I owe the opportunity"—there was self-reproach in the missionary's tone—"I never should have known anything about him."

It seemed that it took three or four people in this case to make one Good Samaritan. It happened, as it is always happening in this fantastic life, that though I wished to ask the missionary about his interview

with Teddy Catty, and had of course rational human motives for such an interest in the lad, one puerile triviality after another preoccupied me, so that I had just a word with him before the ship's company parted at Liverpool.

We were in the custom-house. The missionary's wife, thin, pale, shabby, quietly executive and a lady, kept order among her children in a corner of the great bare, over-lighted, ugly place, and beside her sat Teddy Catty, with his hat pulled over his eyes.

I felt that I could not speak to him there,—to do so would, it seemed, emphasize the cruel, bold publicity of the place,—so I went to where the missionary stood over his bags and boxes—a queer lot—and asked him, if the worthlessness of the words did not choke him, to tell the boy good-by for us, and to say that we felt for him. I stopped short, shamed with the thought of how little we felt, realizing for once not only the powerlessness of human sympathy, but its painfully absurd deficiency in quantity, the unnecessary thickness of our wadding of stupidity. Then I reflected, as I stood there, that this whole little episode of our acquaintance with the missionary and the clown, so slight, yet so dyed in the primary colors of life, its grotesqueness and comedy and inconsequence, its mystery and tragedy, was ending, or rather, as is the way of life, fading, passing, like a cloud, into something else, and that soon the quaint pair would exist for me no more; and I rebelled against the mutability of existence. I said to the missionary: “I shall be in London in a week or two. I don't suppose I'll ever be the least good to you or to Teddy Catty, and

there is no reason in keeping up such an acquaintance as ours; but for no smaller reason than that we are all human beings —” The missionary’s eyes responded so adequately with humor and a good deal beside that for a moment it did not occur to me to finish my sentence, and then I concluded, “let me come to see you or your wife a moment to hear how things are. You’ll probably know something of Teddy Catty for as much as a fortnight longer.”

Yes, he thought his friendship with the clown might survive all-devouring time so long, and he said he would be glad to see me again.

Yet I had been in London a week, and had not looked up my fellow-passengers, when one day, as Amy and I were going through the amazingly crowded rooms of the Royal Academy, whom should we see but the clown! He was sitting on one of the divans, dressed in the conventional mourning of a law-loving Englishman, a frock-coat and a crape-banded silk hat dignifying Teddy Catty’s little figure. We saw him furtively wipe his eyes as he gazed at the gilt-and-canvas-covered wall before him, and we knew Emmy’s picture was there. We soon found it; it was a little one, hung rather high, and, like several thousand others in that home of English art, it was of a baby, and, again like the majority of them, it was a poor picture—dull, conventional. Whatever had been in poor Emmy’s heart when she painted it was concealed under a false, frigid method faithfully carried out.

Teddy’s face worked convulsively for a moment when he saw us, then he pointed out the picture and gave us his place to sit in while we gazed. There was

plainly no need of talking about it; he did not think of comment as becoming the occasion.

"It belonged to one of the dressers in the theater," he said softly after a time. "She had a lot of children, and her husband died, and — Emmy — Emmy helped her, and she was tremendously fond of that baby. She used to keep it at the house days and days to get chances to paint it." Teddy's voice failed him again.

After a while, in the moving of the throng, he got a seat beside us, and I noted as if it were something surprising that in taking it he arranged his coat-tails with the same little odd funniness of movement as of old; it did seem quite strange for a moment that his grief had not lifted him into ideal grace. He looked from one to the other of us, and said, "I was going to try some way to see you ladies, but the missionary said you were going to come to see him. I wanted to tell you that I'm going back with him to China, and I'd never have known him if it had n't been for you."

"Going with him?"

"Yes, Miss Milman; I'm going to see if I can help him — help him be a missionary, you know." Teddy's unfamiliarity with the phrases of the "work" pleased my ear. "I've got a little money," he went on, "and I feel as if I'd like to do something — something religious sometime, and it seems as if this was my chance. I fancy Emmy would like it. But I never could turn in with church or chapel people here at home, I know I could n't. They think a circus man ought to repent a lot, you know, and that I ought to throw over the show business for good, and I don't see how I can, and

I don't know that I want to. Long as Emmy did n't cut it altogether, I don't know as I want to."

"But — what — how are you going to manage out in China?"

"Why, you know the missionary's different from most religious folks; he just takes things naturally; and I've some money by me, and Emmy left me a little —" He stopped a moment and stared fixedly into space, then, shifting his position a little, went on in a different tone: "I can go out there, and then he says he can give me things to do for him as a lay worker,— that's what he calls it,— and that I can be some use to him, and that it'll be easier for me to be in good standing there than here. I don't care how it is, but I'd like to stay with him awhile and do something some way for religion, you know, the real thing. Yes," in answer to a question, "I suppose I'll come back and go in the circus after my money's all gone. They'd never want to support me as if I was a real missionary. I would n't be worth it; but they'll let me be a Christian there."

We shook hands with Teddy Catty at the door of Burlington House, and I saw him no more; but when I called on the missionary he confirmed the story of these queer plans.

"Yes," he said; "Teddy seems so little capable of the ordinary ways of entering into and feeling about the religious life that I don't know what channel of usefulness would be open to him here. He wants to come with me, and it seems to me it is a good step; things are simpler out there. About his coming back — I don't think he'll come back. I think in time he

can be taken fully into the work. If he does return, why, he'll have a fuller religious experience than he has now to fall back on."

And so, thanks somewhat to two highly modern young women professing grave philosophical doubts of the wisdom of foreign missions, this curious transaction came actually to pass, and the only circus clown I ever knew, without renouncing what I shall call his art, sailed away to China as a Christian missionary. .

No philosophical doubts could stop us from bidding him God-speed, nor have they quenched, since that day, a high degree of interest in Chinese missions.

Teddy Catty has not yet returned. We feel it would be piquant to see him again fill his place in the ring, but, withal, other than artistic sentiments will make us contented if the missionary's prediction come true, and the circus knows him no more.

BENTLEY'S SYSTEM.



WAS at work in my little den at the "Evening Appeal" office. The paper had just gone to press, but I was hurrying to finish before going home a "special" for the next day's issue.

Through my open door I could see the dingy desks of the so-called editorial room, most of them vacated now, and from the farthest corner came the drone of a proof-reader. Glancing at this familiar scene, I stopped my writing a moment as my eyes rested on his copy-holder. Instead of the rough young hobble-dehoy who usually filled that place, there sat the most young girl-like of young girls, making a sunshine in the grimy place. She had soft light-brown hair drawn smoothly back into the decentest of little knots; she turned toward me the neatest of little profiles; and she devoted herself to her copy with the gentlest bend of her small head. Just as I was idly recalling the fact that old Martin the proof-reader had once confided to me his desire to get this position for a daughter of his, Bentley, the "star" reporter of the "Appeal," came striding in and toward me.

"Spare me a minute from the tariff?" he questioned, standing in my doorway, pushing his silk hat to the back of his red head with one hand, and resting the other, which held a lighted cigar, against the door-frame.

When I had declared my willingness to lay aside for a time those political labors with which it pleased Mr. Bentley to imagine me always occupied, he took off his hat and laid it with his cigar on the steam-heater outside, came in and seated himself astride my vacant chair, and for a moment stared at me in silence over the back of it.

When he spoke he said: "I'm going to ask a favor of you, Miss Addington, and I wish by a large majority that it was you going to ask one of me. Oh, yes, I know; you're a mighty nice, pleasant, accommodating little girl,—that's aside from my wanting something out of you just now,—but you don't have it any too soft down here, anyhow, and now I'm going to ask you—I'm ashamed of myself. But—well, let me open with the curtain-music, and work up to the last farewell by degrees. The beginning is"—he stopped, waited an instant, got up and turned his chair around, sat down properly, and took up his sentence again as if he had never dropped it—"that I'm in love with and want to marry that little nimini-pimini, white-faced girl of old Martin's out there,"—then relaxing a little from the uncommon seriousness with which this was said,—“and I'd give a hundred dollars to be able, without arousing suspicion, to get hold of that seat that Calvert has there by her. That ain't sentiment, 'I-would-I-were-a-glove-upon-that-hand'



"I AM GOING TO ASK A FAVOR OF YOU."

kind of business; it's pure science. That desk is the strategic key to the whole campaign. I'm not in with Calvert; we've been hating each other too long for me to be able to work up an intimacy with him now just previous to asking him to give me his desk, and it would be too thin, anyhow. There is no way to get that desk—here comes the climax,"—Bentley stopped, and looked at me deprecatingly, appealingly; I was amused to see that he could command such an expression,—“unless”—he stopped again, scowled, and drew a long breath in burlesque of his own discomfort and his resolution, and, as he would have said, took the plunge — “you'd be so angel white as to let him come in here. He's been wanting to do that this long time, not altogether because of his secret desire to be near you, but he thinks it would be nice to be in here away from the lower orders, and convenient to the encyclopedias that he gets his little pieces out of.”

The “Appeal's” limited library was in the room I occupied. Expression of my willingness to share my seclusion with Mr. Calvert did not still Bentley's desire further to explain and justify himself.

“You see,” he went on, “I've got the campaign all planned out, though I can't explain it in a word. I'm perfectly willing to explain it, however. I'm even willing to admit that it would be a pleasure to me to do so. I'm too old and tough to talk about this kind of thing to a man, but there's a sensible diminution of a dangerous pressure in letting off to you a little.”

I shall utterly fail in giving any idea of Bentley unless I am able to convey an impression of the personal unconsciousness that characterized his conver-

sation. He expressed himself in the way that was easiest to him—that is to say, as much as possible by established formulas intelligently applied, sometimes slang, sometimes quotations that became slang in his mouth; but though he often felt the humor of his own ideas, his verbal clothing of them rarely enough attracted his attention.

He turned a look at once grave and quizzical through the door and upon the copy-holder.

“Nothing’s going to change me about wanting that little piece of propriety out there but getting her,” he remarked.

“No, not altogether quite so sudden as you might think,” he said when I expressed my interest in the speed with which he had discovered his intentions; “she was here last month for a week—when you were off doing the woman’s convention. I have n’t ever gotten her out of my head since. It was sudden enough, and I’m hit hard enough. I’m going to put my system to work now for all it’s worth.” He turned back to me, hitched his chair half around so that the distracting picture in the other room was out of his range of vision, and went on:

“You’ve heard that there is a right and a wrong way of doing everything. Well, my system is the one right way of going courting—when you’re courting a woman, that is; I’m sorry it’s not fitted to be more use to you. I’ve got faith in it, or I’d be——” He shook his head slowly in a manner significant of a most uncertain frame of mind. “You can see with half an eye,” he continued in a moment, “that that little thing there has n’t been put through any mill

that would make her think — put her on the lookout to get married. She is n't that kind, anyhow. That's why — one why — I want her, and of course that's the very reason I ain't likely to get her. This world's run that way."

Bentley gazed far out of the window, his upright red hair looking even more astonished than usual as the countenance it surmounted took on an uncommonly grim expression. Then, without moving his head, he brought his eyes back to mine, looking at me sidewise with a return of something of his usual twinkle, a twinkle in eclipse, and declared:

"It's the system I'm asking you to pay tribute to. I'm free to confess, Miss Addington"—here a faint, incredible shade of embarrassment seemed to cross Bentley's countenance—"that I never truly loved before; but yet——" Bentley lifted and knitted his brows as he scratched his head with one finger, and looked silently at me.

I was constrained to say, "Why, yes, Mr. Bentley; 'but yet——'"

"Egg-zactly," he answered heartily; "you are the sort of person I like to talk to. Well, now, my system is applicable in dealing with any young lady whose good will you wish to gain—whose good will you wish to gain," Bentley repeated, brightening with enjoyment of the felicity of this phrase.

"I've had it in shape pretty nearly ever since my coming-out sociable at Cranberry Center. Not with unvarying success; I don't say that; but it's done its part, it's done it well. It is n't as if a professional beauty were using it exactly; I know that. I

have faith in it—I always have had, that is; but now the sight of that white mouse out there takes all the starch out of me. Curious, is n't it, though I don't suppose —— ”

“I think, Mr. Bentley,” I interrupted, “that you are talking against time to put off telling me what your system is.”

“Get there every time, don't you?” said Bentley, admiringly. Then fixing a queer look upon me, in which again appeared that amazing suggestion of shyness, he said slowly :

“Hang around, and say nothing; hang around industriously” — pause — “and say nothing, till more or less urgently invited to. You press the button and we do the rest; these directions are capable of fifty different adjustments to suit the most complicated case.” Bentley was speaking these last sentences half abstractedly, and watching my face anxiously.

As the mystic significance of this formula penetrated my brain I was moved to mirth — mirth that was not lessened by the fact that I was visited by a sudden illuminated vision of the system's possible workings in practice—a vision which at once convinced me of its value.

I wiped my eyes, and gave my hand to Bentley, assuring him that I believed he was master of a great secret.

“You do really?” he broke forth eagerly and seriously. “Say, Miss Addington, you would n't guy a fellow in my fix now, would you? That's only the opening of the campaign, but that's the great critical period, don't you think? That's the merit of the

system, it attacks the opposing sex (opposing sex — not bad, is it?) through their curiosity, see, and they quit being so all-fired opposing, early. Generally you can count on 'em to become helpful pretty soon — helpful in some degree; then 's the time for the next move. I 'm not much at explaining these psychological phenomena, but the system 's all right. 'This conviction is arrived at through *a priori* reasoning, and is confirmed by subsequent observation.'” Bentley stood up as he delivered this last sentence, and looked down upon me with a pleasant combination of sad appeal and humorous patronage; he was quoting from my maiden editorial, a document that had filled him with mysterious mirth.

I began to arrange my papers for departure, assuring him in the mean while of my good will toward his enterprise—that seemed the right word for it.

He apologized for taking so much of my time, and yet further explained his needs and plans, as, for instance, his “scheme” for letting Calvert know that the way was clear for him to change his desk, while he was standing feeling for a match, and I was putting on my hat and coat.

“You see,” he said finally, barring my way a moment at the open door, “it is hopeless for me to try to hang around in Hoboken—that's where old Martin lives. I don't say I'm sorry; anything but Hoboken. But there it is; it is perfectly clear that however I might walk in the letter I'd blow the whole spirit of the system the minute I stepped my foot into the parental flat. It's too late to do the Damon and

Pythias act with old Martin. I 'm forced to abuse your generosity. Thank you, thank you; it's been a boon to talk to you, it has indeed. I'll work the racket with Calvert a little slow; may be a day or two before I get it around to him that the coast is clear. Then I'll have to wait upon occasion for a good excuse to jump down there and take his place. If the office gets on to me there's no telling what'll be to pay. Good day, good day; I'd jump at the chance to help you get married."

Bentley picked up his hat and his cigar, put the one on the back of his head and the other in his mouth, just as he gave me what was in spirit a courteous, grateful little nod of farewell.

Old Martin's little girl still bent her pretty head studiously over her copy without a hair's-breadth's variation of attitude.

Calvert had just come in and seated himself in scowling introspective preoccupation at his desk.

That was the last I saw of the office for three months. On the way home, through the untimely movement of a car, I sprained my ankle, and for a weary while was confined to the house.

In a few days, however, I began work again, writing as I lay on a sofa, and depending on messenger-boys and visits of mingled business and condolence from other members of the staff to keep me in touch with the office.

I had been at home perhaps a month when one day Mr. Maloney, a gentleman who had filled by turns many different positions in the "Appeal" office, each, as a rule, being less important than the last, was

ushered in. The joy of gossip lighted up his bleary blue eyes.

"And how are you, Miss Addington?" he began—he had a charming touch of brogue—"And indeed it's enough to make the Old One himself sorry for you to see what a good time you get out of the worst of occasions. That is a bit of a paradox, you are saying, and so is every other true thing that ever was remarked in this topsyturvy world; and you are the one that's got the philosophical head on your shoulders to find that out long ago, without waiting for an observant old blind mole like me to tell you. Yes; I'm an illustration—allow me."—Maloney shakily stooped to pick up my pen.—"I can serve as an illustration when you write your celebrated treatise on the paradoxical. And now don't interrupt me for the space of a minute; you're a sad chatterbox, Miss Addington." He stopped and laid an unmanicured forefinger against his grizzled temple. "I'm preparing the way to a graceful transition; I would be telling you something that is for your amusement. I am an observant old mole, I was saying, and now I can't be giving you one particle of useful information as to whether or no the boss is going to sell the paper out to the Republicans next week, nor as to what will become of you and me if he does, though I dare say there are other blind moles that have discovered all that; but I'm about to tell you that that big brute Bentley is in love with that old proof-reader's little girl, and none in the office knows it but me and him, and it's ten to one I know it best! Yes; sure I thought you'd be grateful to me for a little diversion like that. It's not every

day you can see, or even hear, what a brass monkey's like when it's in love. Its experience much more resembles that of a white man than you would ever imagine, and that's the truth. No; he's not trying, as he would say himself, worse luck to him — he's not just trying to mash her; he's in love, I'm telling you, and his feelings are not dissimilar to those depicted by Tom Moore and other poets that the hulking ignoramus never heard of — and there is the paradoxical for you. Me bald spot was bigger than a trade dollar before I could have believed such a contradiction possible; so think what an inexplicable surprise it must be to him, that has no more power of ratiocination than me blackthorn there. I have been industriously gathering the evidence for days, till me conviction was complete, before I'd come to tell you.

"Well, now, the first I noticed was the way he went white and red when she came to speak to him about his copy one day. It fills me with rage to think of that, it does indeed. To think of him having the additional impudence to exhibit a capacity for changing color like a girl!"

Maloney stayed an hour, and I am sure missed an assignment, telling me with infinite relish of detail all the ins and outs of Bentley's manœuvres.

"He used to write exceptionally clear copy, you know," said he; "he has no more education than me pet cat, but he can write like a grocer's clerk, and he used to do it. I've edited his copy for all he makes such big money. When old Sheffield was managing he used to call on me to help him out when he was incapacitated with drink. He said — but it's no

matter what he said ; his betters have said more. But I've edited Bentley's copy when it was clear as print, and now, if you 'll believe me, it looks little better than your own, begging your pardon. That makes business now and again with the proof-reader, you understand, and somehow he 's hocus-pocused things till it seems as if Martin read nearly all his stuff ; but I've not found out how he manages that." Maloney added the last sentence in a tone of apologetic regret.

"Does the little girl notice all this, do you think?" I asked.

"Indeed and I wish you were down there to say yourself. How can I tell? The little white still ones like that—the Old One himself can make out nothing about them. And Bentley 's sly, wonderful sly, all around. I don't understand him, though ; how should ever an Irishman comprehend the way of the likes of him with his brass and his slyness? Why don't he go at it like a man, and display to all the world that he 's in love up to his eyes, and he 's proud of it? That 's what a woman likes, be she old or be she young."

Overweighted as I was with Bentley's secret, I was tempted to edge upon it by discussing this point, and I said that undoubtedly a woman was apt to like that kind of tribute, but I was not sure that it always followed that it made her like the man equally.

"And if he can give her what she likes, ought not he to be satisfied, I say, and if she does not like him so ardently, is n't there the less chance that he 'll marry her to the sorrow of both of 'em?"

I told Maloney that he made my head ache, and he

went away, pledging me to secrecy about Bentley. Nevertheless I was not wholly surprised when the next visitor from the office quoted Maloney as authority for the news that Mr. Bentley "was making—that is, he was paying attention, not exactly paying attention, but Mr. Maloney thought he was going to pay attention to that Miss Martin."

This visitor was the managing editor's type-writer, an elderly young woman, not bad-looking, but with a constrained manner, grayish hair, and a deep-lying desire for human intercourse that should be labeled intellectual, or, in her own phrase, to be sociable and improve herself with literary people—literary people being, in her opinion, any who earned a living by the use or abuse of the written symbols of language.

"Mr. Maloney says that Mr. Bentley is—that he cares about her," she said tentatively, sitting uncomfortably on the edge of her chair.

I conquered the inevitable throb of resentment that I felt at the discovery, faintly expected though it was, that Maloney was just as confidential with the type-writer as with me. As I had felt myself rarely gracious in appreciating Maloney's out-at-elbows charm, and had credited him with a becoming sense of my kindness, this required an instant's communion with my higher self, and then I was rewarded by a delighted perception of how utterly like Maloney it was to lapse into intimate conversation with any petticoated object within his orbit. The appeal that these storied garments would always make to him was now reinforced, too, by that false sense of masculine dignity which makes men slow to gossip of familiar

personalities with one another. Even Maloney felt constrained for a time to give his really interesting and curious news only to the patronized sex, though, to do the staff of the "Appeal" justice, the time soon came when the artificial ice was broken, and Bentley's hopes, fears, and prospects seemed to occupy them night and day, to the manifest gain in color, vivacity, and value of their conversation.

Bentley had not been to see me since my accident, though he had sent me a bottle of champagne. I am sure I don't know how Bentley's sympathy ever found vent on occasions when a gift of champagne could not express it; perhaps such occasions never arose. Soon after the type-writer's call I got a letter from him. He said:

Have thought about elevating up to your maiden bower to see how you are, but I hear, anyhow, every day, and, judging by the way old Maloney blows about cheering your fevered brow, I conclude you get about as much "Appeal" office as you can stand. Then I've got that girl on the brain so bad that I'm no good. If I saw you I'd talk about nothing else. I'm working the system for all it's worth. There's nothing else for me to do. I'll send you a bulletin semi-occasionally. I lose so much sleep about the thing myself, I feel as if the suspense were holding you back too.

I gave her my buttonhole bouquet day before yesterday. I've come down to dressing like a regular cane-sucker. She put it in a glass of water. Then I never let on I knew she was alive for thirty-three hours and a half. To-day I broke out in a fresh place, and asked her to have a glass of beer when the men got some at noon. That was coming things too close together, but I was nearly laid up with the strain of not looking at her for so long, and that type-writing girl, the old one, was here, and I gave her a drink, too. You see this is all according to the system intellectually interpreted, the principle of the core of the

system being to keep yourself before the public and not show your hand. That white rabbit did the unconscious act as if she 'd been horn before the footlights. She 's a tough one. It must be put on; she must have her little attention turned my way some, don't you think? I've been keeping this thing up steady, but I'm afraid I'm losing my fine touch, and she not breathed yet. It makes my head swim, Miss Addington.

I guess you 're putting up a thanksgiving prayer by this time because I have been keeping away from you. All right, put up another while you 're about it on account of the fact that I 'm going to stay away. And I'll make my other bulletins shorter; so there 's another item.

If you 'd think of something I could do for you it would be the best assignment I'll get this month. I'm in just as bad a fix as to obligations as if you were being bored by Calvert every day. You 'll have it all the worse in the end; by tho time you get back he'll believe he owns that room, and he'll only let you in as a thundering favor.

Bentley's next bulletin was made out in orthodox form :

SLIGHT VICTORY.

The Besieged weakens so far as to snub Besieger. After the beer Besieger went into his shell. Forgot to say good morning. Opened the window without asking permission. Besieged in subsequent conversations was sternly businesslike in a mousy manner.

N. B. After all, that 's about her usual act, so probably there 's nothing in it after all. I wish a sprained ankle was all there was the matter with me.

Yours truly,

B. BENTLEY.

The next voiced a surprising proposition.

I am thinking [it read] of doing the ancient honorable and saying something to old Martin. I don't know anything more about the little clock-works that run that tame lamb of his than I did at first. You might as well try to agitate a Waterbury;

but the office seems to be getting on to me, cur-r-rses on 'em, and I'm afraid Martin may get fidgety. I bet it's that gabby old Irishwoman of yours that's been giving me away. I'd thrash him for the cash he's got in his clothes, just on the chance, if any one would guarantee that it would pay for a drink. Then if I blow off to him (Martin), ten to one he'll develop a colossal genius for making an ass of himself eighteen different ways.

This was the last I heard directly from Bentley for several weeks. In the mean time I occasionally had news of him from other people. An office-boy came up for copy one day, and after he had gotten it continued to hang around in an engaging manner. He was a nice boyish boy, and spent his spare time writing to some one whom he addressed as "Miss Tooty Fareman, dear Miss."

He was unnaturally careless of these letters (as of all other matters personal and professional), and once, before realizing what it was, I read the opening sentence of one. It ran, "The Hours I spend away from Thee Tooty are no good whatever, but I know you don't feel truly as I do." So you see he was prepared by experience to take an interest in the game of love wherever he saw it.

"Well, Jimmy, how are things going at the office?" I asked, by way of being friendly, while he stood irresolutely by the door.

"They say—they say Mr. Bentley's in love with that Martin girl," said Jimmy, his tone even more than his phrasing showing that his callow contempt for feminine kind still included all of the sex but Miss Fareman or her successor.

"Do you think he is?" I asked.

"When I look at her I don't," he asserted. "She don't amount to nothin', but Mr. Bentley acts kind of queer. He keeps looking at her when he thinks nobody don't see him; he don't notice me. He stops still sometimes and stares right before him till somethin' makes him jump. I think that's a bad sign, don't you, Miss Addington?"

At last the time came when I was able to make a little trip down-town. I went to the office, but not to the editorial rooms, because they could be reached only by means of a short flight of steps after leaving the elevator, and I did not want to attempt the climb. My errand was with that great person known here as "the boss."

The boss's name was J. B. Higgens. He was a big-brained, big-bodied, coarse-fibered, powerful old fellow, with a good deal of human nature in him. And though all the other women, and most of the men, in his employ stood in terror of him, I did not, and so I did not, like them, altogether hate him. He was highly skeptical of good always and anywhere, but yet he had too much sense not to know that distrust can overleap the mark, can be tripped in its own net, and it always pleased me to see his suspicions both sustained and held in check by his sagacity.

He met me with his gray eyes peering alertly out from under his shaggy eyebrows and over his puffy purple cheeks, to see whether after all I had really been having such a bad time with that ankle. I had come down to fight out a little question of salary, and Mr. Higgens met me as both counsel and plaintiff on the other side. The contest and its results are matters

aside from this history, but we are concerned with the touch of humanness that now and again, against his will and his theories, diversified his simple brutality, and to which we owe another glimpse of Bentley.

"The boss" always began an interview with me by a distinct declaration, in manner, that I was an employee, and only an employee, and that he utterly refused to take the slightest notice of the fact that I was also a woman. A helpless sense of his own small, much-degraded, much-outraged, but still not quite eradicated masculine instinct of chivalry toward women underlay and mainly produced this bluster, and a little tact could usually be counted upon to still it, and even to play upon his weakness so far as to insure the poor woman before him something like fair treatment—a thing he was by no means in the habit of according except on the self-respectful and unquestionably justifiable ground of immediate self-interest.

The queer thing was that this novel experience of disloyalty to his principles nearly always pleased him for a few minutes; he found it pleasant until the predatory habits of a lifetime devoted to "business" closed in upon him again, perhaps bringing about a reactionary irritation. To-day, when the question of salary was settled, he dropped back in his leather chair and began a little conversation. He was always above the familiar, cheap affectation of being impossibly busy.

He asked where I lived, as he had done more than once before, and what rent I paid, and what kind of a doctor I had, and then he said inconsequently, with his own odd compound of humor, suspicion, scorn,

and simple human interest: "You 'll be getting married some of these days just like any other fool. They say that ass Bentley is in love up there," pointing with a rough, fat thumb to the ceiling.

"I knew he 'd turned almighty no account lately," he went on; "so when I got hold of this I sent for him and gave him some good advice; but he told me he wanted to marry the girl. I had a notion to dismiss him on the spot."

He drew down his overhanging brows and looked at me as piercingly as if he were moved by some weightier motive than a simple elephantine, unscrupulous desire to betray me into an amusing burst of sentiment.

I only said how justifiable such a step would be, and how right he was in publishing Mr. Bentley's unworthy sentiments. His temper ruffled a little.

"A good deal more justifiable than you 'd think," he asserted aggressively. "I wish I 'd never knocked under to hire women."

"Oh, well," I replied soothingly, "you can comfort yourself with the reflection that you did it only to save money."

He shot another scowling, scrutinizing glance at me.

"Do you know the girl?" he asked.

No, I said; I had never spoken to her.

"She must be a queer fool," went on the man of reason. "Why don't she haul him in and get the thing over with? She can't expect to do any better."

I said that perhaps she did not want to marry him. My employer snorted with genuine irritation.

"Want! What else are you women always want-

ing?" And then he added, after obviously swallowing an oath, a special courtesy I much appreciated, "Unless there is every reason why you should want it, unless you 'd be some good to somebody married; then it 's a fact there is no telling what fine scruples you 'll set up; there 's no counting—" Then, interrupting himself, he said, with a change of tone, and a return to his habitual grim rudeness of manner, a rudeness differing from that he had previously shown in this conversation, inasmuch as it put an end to interchange, "I don't like loivering around the shop. I ain't going to stand much of it." And with that he began to shuffle the papers on his desk in aggressive unconsciousness of my existence.

I got some pleasure out of the familiar comedy of this dismissal and my own manner of exit, but still it gave now, as always, a little special emphasis to the distaste I felt for the down-town world, and I found myself hurrying through my battle of business in the counting-room, which was complicated by a frank established system of small thefts from employees, that I might the sooner get home, out of this wilderness of primitive savagery modernly disguised, into a world where civilization has made a little progress. I was so glad to be in my own flat that not till after dinner did I let my mind turn back to the afternoon's incidents and inspect certain reflections which I was half conscious I had made. I now discovered that I thought Bentley's courtship might cost more than it would come to. There had been something very sinister in Higgins's manner while making his final remarks; he had disclosed then an irritation he had

masked before. I knew he would not discharge Bentley. If he had been going to do that he would never have hinted at it as a possibility; and why should he get rid of Bentley when Bentley would not care a rap, and some other paper would receive the acquisition of a highly enterprising and gifted reporter? No; it was old Martin who would suffer, and to old Martin the loss of his place would be a sadly important matter. He was past the age when men easily find new masters; he had been in the "Appeal" office a deal longer than the boss himself; he was just the kind of faithful old fixture that the boss had a temperamental tendency to oust, despite even the whisperings of self-interest, and self-interest could not be counted on for much service here—fair proof-readers are not rare.

I forgot Martin for a minute in the pleasure of contemplating the folly of the philosophers who call self-interest the dominating motive of man, seeing that proposition just then in the light of the fact that self-interest was the one principle that Higgens proposed to himself, and that he lived in a world most cunningly calculated to stiffen his adherence to it, and that yet his whims, whims for showing his authority, for humiliating those who seemed to be living independent of his permission, for expressing his inconsistent dislike of low-toned temperaments, even, as I have before pointed out, for indulging occasionally in the exercise of the forbidden decencies of his nature—that yet all these caprices, and others, frequently swerved him from the straight and simple course that he proposed to himself; then I came back to the point

that was making itself clear—that I could not bear to think of poor old Martin getting into trouble. At last, not being able to rid myself of this uneasiness by the obvious consideration that it was none of my business, I sat down and wrote a succinct statement of my conversation with Higgens and of my fears to Bentley, concluding with a piece of gratuitous advice to the effect that he had better find some way of adapting his system to the exigencies of the boss's temper, or abandon it for some less noticeable and generally irritating method of attack.

The next day he made a short call upon me.

His red hair was as aggressively upright as ever, his clothes as new, his silk hat as shiny, but still there was a drooping sadness about the whole figure of the man that these characteristic and contrasting details only emphasized.

He brought his hat into my little drawing-room, and deposited it with absent-minded automatic caution well under one corner of the sofa on which he sat.

He could hardly force himself from the contemplation of his own woes long enough to ask me mechanically:

"How 's your game l—— foot?"—Bentley had his own ideas of the proprieties—and he did not even affect to listen to my reply. "Bet I'm dished," he said, with a tragic note in his voice. After a pause he went on: "I've got to cut loose from the system, and without that I ain't got no self-confidence—I ain't got no self-confidence," he repeated with abstracted solemnity.

I looked up to catch the conscious twinkle that I

involuntarily expected after this unprecedented statement, but it was not forthcoming. In the stress of this hour Bentley felt that he had come upon a disheartening lack in his nature. "The system ain't fazed her not a nickel's worth. She's just where she was six weeks ago."

"Maybe not," I ventured.

"Aw, yes, she is; she ain't a second Sarah Bernhardt." A moment's silence, and then he went gloomily on: "I've out with it to old Martin, and now I'm going to out with it to her, sink or swim. I swore old Martin to secrecy, and I guess he's been all right there; he seemed too ashamed to be likely to talk about it."

"Did he; did he really?" I exclaimed, laughing with the pleasure of coming on this phase of Martin, and forgetful for the moment of my sympathy with Bentley. "Tell me about it."

Bentley gave me a look in which vague reproach and vague sympathy mingled; he too in his way had an artistic enjoyment of life, and before he realized that he was descending from the pedestal where he and sorrow sat, he found himself telling how Martin was not up to the ancient honorable methods, and felt as shy as if some one were proposing marriage to himself. "At last," said Bentley, "he piped his eye and said he had a large family, but he never could bear to have Linnie — that's its little name — think he wanted to get rid of her. He seemed to think, if I was doing the ancient honorable so far, I'd be sure to go the whole animal, and want my bride whether she wanted me or not. I told him I was n't ancient

and honorable to that extent. I drew the line at the girl; I'd court her, if he pleased, entirely for myself, and she and I would settle things between us. I was only showing him my hand, not asking any help in the game. I was glad I spoke to him, because for one thing it showed—well, for several reasons, though she could n't ever have been spoiled and made like some, anyhow. Much good it all is to me," he went on dejectedly, "when she dissembles her love and kicks me down-stairs." He looked far out of the window and over the chimney-tops.

He had passed the light-hearted stage in which he liked to characterize the girl he loved in the names he gave her, and in his depression was taking refuge with all mankind in the significant pronoun.

I was moved to apologize for having added to his perplexities. He waved me aside. "O cracky, I don't want to lose old Martin his place, and I bet you're right about it. That old"—Bentley paused and drew two long dashes in the air—"he's capable of anything; besides," his voice sinking to a graver note, "I'd 'bout made up my mind to take the jump anyhow. It's just as well. The system's broken down. I never thought she caved in a hair's-breadth but once, and I guess I was wrong then. Anyhow, she never did it again, and one swallow don't make a summer. Good-by; I might as well go."

He began to look for his hat in a preoccupied way. I got it from under the sofa for him, and he left.

Two days later I received this telegram :

The country saved.

B. BENTLEY.

This was followed by a note asking me to let him bring his "girl" up to see me. I doubted whether Linnie Martin cared as much to come as he cared to have her; but her father and I had always been good friends,—that is, we had always taken particular pains to be civil to each other and to exchange confidences about the weather when, as might happen twice a month, our paths crossed,—so I hoped this would in some measure neutralize the dislike of me that the recital of my amiable influence upon her destiny would naturally inspire.

Bentley brought her to the flat very soon, staying only a few minutes himself, but taking pains to assure me that the office was perfectly in the dark as to the outcome of his courtship, and that all the affectation of indifference could do was being done to soothe Mr. Higgens. "That is," said Bentley, pointing with his thumb, "she 's doing just like she always did, and I 'm doing just like her." Next week, he said, she would leave the office.

Bentley wore a new aspect; there were, though my report of the interview so far may not show it, touches of dignity and deference and reticence in his manner and expression that, though they did not change his familiar guise or tone to a casual glance or a half-listening ear, were novel and pleasing to an acuter observation.

He soon declared that he must go out to "see a man," and said he would come back for Linnie in half an hour. He came to me and, with a speaking gaze charged with confidential communications, wrung my hand till he brought tears to my eyes and to his own.

He made it clear that he was giving me the glory of his success—an honor to which I had not the least claim; but I understood the state of mind in which it pleased him to lavish his welling gratitude to things in general upon some definite and tangible object.

Then he left me alone with the small woman who had been causing all this pothor.

You could see in every line of her attitude and in every detail of her neat, appropriate gown and jacket and hat what an example of the discreet virtues and the pleasing proprieties she was born to be.

I gazed upon her with appreciative admiration mingled with fear, for I was not inspired with the greatest confidence in her powers of conversation, though she had gotten through her greetings nicely enough. I did her injustice: she was entertaining. Despite all her innate sense of propriety and reserve, she was sufficiently moved by her engagement to want to talk about it and "him"; and this state of mind always may be confidently counted upon to furnish entertainment of one kind or another.

She first said, prettily, that Mr. Bentley had told her how kind I had been in thinking about her father. "It would be awful bad for pa to lose his place," she said, and I must explain that the written words do much injustice to the effect of her soft speech. "I think it will be better for me to stop going there as soon as I can, and then Mr. Higgins—if he don't see me to remind him—he 'll forget all about—about what he did n't like." And she looked down, and carefully measured off small sections of her pocket-handkerchief, and flushed a little.



"SHE SPOKE OF HER ENGAGEMENT."

I was struck with her comprehension of Higgins's childishness, typical hard-hearted business potentate that he was, and said so.

Her color rose and faded a time or two before she said, as she measured her handkerchief yet more scrupulously :

"Mr. Bentley says you were very kind to him, that you helped him get that—that desk." And she looked up with a slight, shy smile.

Yes, I said ; I thought I knew Mr. Bentley's designs some time before she did. I began to see that it would be like stopping a process of nature to take her away from this subject.

"I did n't know them till two days ago," she said, looking attentively at the toes of the boots crossed in front of her, and as if she had more in her mind than she was saying. I waited. "I felt—I don't know how."

"Did you fall in love at first sight too, as Mr. Bentley did?"

She shook her head in silence. "No'm," she said after a moment ; "I thought he was the—the plainest gentleman in the office when I first went there, though of course—raising her voice a little—"I could see he was very *fine*-looking ; but I did n't know how smart he was then, and how everybody thought of him. That is n't what makes me care for him though," she added quickly.

"Well, now," I asked judicially, "what does make you care for him? That will be very interesting to hear."

This scientific method of inquiry seemed to suit her

own sense of the serious value of the investigation. She turned her head on one side, and looked at me with an expression of intent intellectual preoccupation, as a pigeon might look if it gave its mind to mathematics.

"I don't think I can tell exactly," she said at last, with an inflection that recognized the mystery and novelty of this inability. "At least," she went on painstakingly and slowly—"of course I ought to care for him, when he's so—so nice, but I don't know as I can tell just what made me think about it first, only he acted so queer. Sometimes for a long time—" She stopped, cogitated, then went on. "Sometimes it seemed as if he felt one way, and sometimes as if he did n't; that made me think about him at first, I suppose, and then he just went on acting queer all the time."

The system—was not this a disclosure that the system had done its work after all?

"And you went on thinking about him more and more," I said. "Mr. Bentley did not think you thought about him at all."

"He don't think so now," said Linnie Martin. "I did n't care for him—much—till—until he asked me, and I don't think gentlemen ought to know—ought to know everything."

A JEST OF FATE.



IT was eight o'clock on a clean-washed, clear-cut, sun-bathed October morning when my mother and I climbed into the second-best buggy behind old white Telly for a twenty-mile drive "up the country." The Judge waved us a courtly adieu; little Tom and his sister hooked themselves on behind to go with us to the big gate, the opening of which furnished them with a reason for being; Aunt Sally called out from the back gallery last messages to Cousin Nancy; the negroes collected at doors and windows to see us off, and we rolled gently away into the fairy-land of unfamiliar roads.

Our route wound here and there past fodder-stacked corn-fields, brier-grown old pastures, irregular old farm-houses sleeping in the sunshine, populous negro cabins, and, last and best, through vine-tangled, enchanting, enchanted woods. The country we traversed had for our esthetic interests the advantage of being

poor and sparsely settled; as we went on it became still rougher and lonelier. When the sun set behind us we were at a fork in the road, in the fullest uncertainty as to our proper route, and with the last house three miles behind us.

Our last instruction had been to "Jes keep the plain, big road right on to Squire Claymore's."

One road, so far as we could see, was as big as the other. One led down into a swampy wood that looked in the failing light as if it might be all too fruitful of adventure. The other took its way over a high, open country and seemed safer and pleasanter, and on this ground we logically chose it. Soon the open country ended, and we found ourselves in something worth calling a forest; it grew denser and darker as we advanced; the night was settling down upon us.

"There are immense tracts like this up here in the barrens," said my mother in a voice that assumed the tone of a philosophical statement, but which rebelliously vibrated with a growing uneasiness. "I thought back there, when we first got into the woods, that the road looked like an old unused track. I suppose we might drive on so all night."

Just then there appeared at Telly's head the dark figure of a man. Vague horrors—thoughts of escaped convicts, desperate negroes—pressed on my brain, but my mother showed that she had not forgotten backwoods manners and methods and pluck. She stopped the buggy, and in tones as friendly and confident as she could make them asked where we were.

"Wale, ma'm," said the dim and dreadful figure, in an amiable masculine drawl, "it air called 'twext four

an' five miles to Squar' Claymore's, though it air my conviction it air nearer five than four. Your road lay p'intedly the other way about from the way you air a-comin'. I would say to you that you stand a powerful pore chance of gettin' to the Squar's to-night, an' I should be proud to have you stay at my house. Jes drive along a yard or two: there's my house, an' sech as 't is you air freely welcome to it."

Before us was a clearing, and in the midst stood a well-built, double log-house the open doors and windows of which poured out upon the night the rich and changeful lights of hickory fires. The sight was good to the eyes. We gladly accepted its master's invitation, and alighted.

In this haven of quiet and homely comfort I met one of our "blind and blundering race" whose history "the Aristophanes of Heaven" doubtless found uncommonly amusing. She hardly seemed food for Olympian mirth that night, she was such a serious, modest little maid. Of course she was fair to look upon, else who would care to write her story?

She was too grave in line to be exactly pretty, and too slight and small to be beautiful, and the word handsome was made for earthlier beings; but with her severe linsey-woolsey gown defining her figure so sweetly that a sculptor might have joyed in it, and with her straight, pure yellow hair in a knot that was Greek without knowing it, and with her knitting to give her grace, she filled me with delight. I longed to hurl her straightway into some vague bright romance.

My mother fell to talking with the loquacious father

of early days in Tennessee, of old settlers, and panthers, and early politics. She had warmed to him from the moment she saw Henry Clay's picture above the door. The sons sat about in heavy hospitable discomfort; the fat mother dozed in the corner. I roasted before the fire till I was drunk with sleepiness, and Patsy, the yellow-haired little damsel, was detailed to show me to bed. She led me from the fire-lighted room across a passage, roofed, but not closed at the ends, where for a moment we were in the dark still night, and could see, over the close black woods, the sparkling stars, and could hear distant wild noises.

With serious courtesy she showed me into a big square room like the one we had left, and like it abundantly furnished and decorated by a blazing fire. Two four-post bedsteads, piled high with feather-beds and adorned with gorgeous clean patchwork, stood in imposing array one behind the other at one side. An ancient colored picture of a family of albinos hung against the naked wood of the wall. A low splint-bottom chair was drawn up to a scrupulously swept hearth. The crisp night air had waked me up. Patsy and I eyed each other.

"Don't you want to sit down here with me awhile?" I said.

"Yessum," said Patsy, seating herself demurely, but with bright eyes; and not till she was quite settled did she add in a deprecatory tone, "but I'm afeard I'm keepin' you up; I reckon you'd ought to be goin' to bed atter your journey."

Patsy was a backwoodsman, and with all her demureness was devoid of the shyness characteristic of

that very different person, the merely rural citizen. I thought her interest in Strathboro' extraordinary, as she gently plied me with questions about that sleepy little town.

"Strathboro' is mighty enticin', I reckon; you don't live there neither, do you? You 've lots of kinsfolks there, though, hain't you? I 've heern as Judge Kilbraith have a marvel of a house. He 's your uncle, ain't he?

"His boys is small, ain't they? Miz Claymore's is mighty nigh growed up"; and here Patsy paused in her soft prattle to get her knitting out of her pocket. I was keeping her going as tactfully as I could.

"Your cousin Walter air mightily interested in the farm. He do think, I heern the men say, that he can improve the lan'. Your cousin Elmore air makin' a lawyer of hisself, they say, down to Strathboro'."

She was a brave little maid and as full of skilled duplicity as a mother-bird, but nature played her a cruel trick, and as on the last word she lifted her eyes from a troublesome stitch in her knitting a tidal wave of a blush drowned her. I bent studiously over the shoe I was unbuttoning, and said yes, that Elmore was studying law with my uncle, Judge Kilbraith, and that he did this and wore that and intended the other, all in the most incidental manner. I thought the pleasure of hearing about him would soonest efface the bitter consciousness of the blush. In taking this course I suppressed my own sentiments.

I detested my cousin Elmore Claymore. He was a curious being, as beautiful as an angel, with straight,

strong features, large, limpid, dark-lashed gray eyes, an exquisite smile, and a wonderful inexplicable imitation intellect. I don't think any one ever quite understood what he was and what he was not, and by the mass of his acquaintances the sham character of his cerebration was never detected. He made speeches at meetings—election meetings, town meetings, temperance meetings, and Sunday-school picnics. All oratorical opportunities were embraced, and his speeches were full of metaphor and alliteration, and were informed with a really splendid temperamental fire—which had nothing whatever to do with his ideas, or rather which successfully survived their absence.

Southerners of all classes worship intellect, and are much given to regarding it as something quite too bright and good for human nature's daily food, and not to be judged by the coarse logic of every-day existence. Nowhere else is the failure of the man who "would have done great things in Paradise" looked upon with such kindly respect; and this beautiful trait, the awe of what they can see and can't see over, serves well many a harebrained crank and rattle-headed charlatan.

Elmore Claymore was not exactly either a crank or a charlatan. He had flashes of appreciation and curious flickerings of thought through his rhetoric. Of course he was made to be an actor if only he had ever heard of such a thing; it is odd to think, with his beauty and his ardor, what a great man he might have become. In the world in which he lived I saw nothing before him but ignominious failure; it did not seem to me that he had the mental coherence to

see that the whole of a thing is equal to the sum of all its parts.

I could fancy him going off: "What is the whole of a thing equal to? What can it be equal to in this land of equality, in this reunited Union, but to its own unity, each individual in one common brotherhood?" and with luminously pale face and glowing eyes feeling that he had made a step toward bridging the bloody chasm of civil war.

My uncle, John Kilbraith, a grimly humorous and somewhat cynical personage, saw through Elmore completely. He was, I believe, the chief joy of Uncle John's life: to see the impression that he made on people, to watch him sway a crowd with his passionate, sounding swash, to observe his deepening regard for himself, were pleasures which never palled.

I burst forth one day, in the presence of several people, with my estimate of Elmore's powers, and he stopped me with a look.

When we were alone he said: "Remember, if you could unmask Elmore and have him recognized as a fool, you 'd deal him a death-blow, and his mother as well."

"But, uncle," said I, "you — don't you suppose — you must — that life will unmask him? You don't think he can go on through actual affairs and be estimated as these school-girls estimate him?"

Judge Kilbraith looked at me with curious scorn.

"You don't know much about actual affairs, do you? When you do you 'll find out that it is not in this world that they reduce men to their fighting weight. That's an illusion. Some affairs may. You 'd

think war would as much as anything, but it did n't. Ask any soldier if the best men got the best places. I suppose a professor of mathematics must know something of his business, and in the dry-goods trade an eye on the market may be imperative; but though a lawyer does n't have as good a chance as a doctor to be a fraud, I can tell you that there are more things than law or logic that decide his fate. Elmore stands a good chance for a good living. Lawyers may have their opinion about him, but as long as he has juries on his side it will not become the lawyers to express themselves; and until he gets a chance to establish himself with the juries the less his kinsfolk do to discount him the better for the family."

Patsy listened and knitted as I chattered on about my various relatives, particularly Elmore, and she occasionally brought forth a question or remark.

"Miz Claymore 's mighty proud. She air good to rale pore white folks and to niggahs, but she 's ha'sh and proud with 'e neighbors which ain't pore and ain't quality," she said once. She trusted herself no more on the fatal name, and this apt and true characterization of Cousin Nancy, whose darkest dread was that of becoming or having any of her children become one with the people around her, was her nearest approach to the subject of Elmore or her relations with him or his family. She did not quite recover her equanimity, and when she went to go the faint color crept reminiscently up her snowdrop face.

Evidently this homespun small person belonged to the class of women in whom sex and pride are forever united as one thing; whose sense of femininity and

dignity are one. To have her heart's blood thus turn rank and successful traitor to her heart's secret—it struck me as a small tragedy. After she had gone I lay deep cuddled in my clean, fresh feather-bed, watching the firelight flicker on the big polished cherry knobs of my four-post bedstead, trying to see the case in the humorous light which I felt it should by rights present. But no; the humor was there certainly, but my mind steadfastly refused to be amused, and I slipped into sleep with a weird confusion in my dreams between Patsy knitting steadfastly by the fire and the sweet ringing notes of the fatal horn in “Hernani.”

Naturally the next morning the whole matter looked very commonplace. Only Patsy's fresh and gentle loveliness, as she came in with a bucket of spring water, saved me from so reacting on my own emotions as faintly to detest her; so much are we ourselves akin to the capricious powers we rail against. But I melted completely when she stood gazing at me silently and wistfully as I put the last touches to my toilet while old Telegraph and the buggy awaited us at the door. All the yearning and wonder about the great world of Strathboro', all my fascination as its representative, and more still as a kinswoman of Elmore's, were expressed in her serious, fine little face.

To me it was anything but an anticlimax when she touched with reverent finger my jacket and half whispered, “Air that the fashion?”

The poor little daughter of Eve, with her heavy heart, and yet room in it for this sweet interest in that great abstraction, the Fashion!

Before I left I promised to send her patterns of every visible garment I wore. I saw her again sooner than I expected; indeed, there was then little reason to suppose we should meet again.

We were to stay but a week at Cousin Nancy's, and we would then pass over the utmost boundary of her world into that unimagined universe beyond Strath-boro'. Cousin Nancy's sternly handsome profile grew sterner when I attempted to gossip lightly about our hosts the Nonlys. Through a long and lonely life she had too conscientiously asserted her class superiority — such as it was — against poverty and a *mésalliance* and an untoward environment to find it practicable to approach the subject of the Nonlys in this easy, matter-of-course, undefining way. Moreover, it appeared that the Nonlys were in a measure disgraced among their own class.

“Bob Nonly is a distiller,” said Cousin Nancy finally and with a final air. Up to a recent date the temperance sentiments of the South found their chief if not their sole expression in the social ostracism of all but the largest and most prosperous of the dealers in spirituous liquors. The thoroughgoing nature of this ban atoned by severity upon the weak for its relaxation in favor of the strong, and relieved most minds of any sense of further obligation to the morals of the question.

Bob Nonly, we were told, now found his associates chiefly among the neighboring mountaineers, whose code on whisky-making is even more liberal than the Government's; and his children were growing up “with little more manners or learning than if they

lived on the mountain themselves," proceeded Cousin Nancy, warming to the subject with human interest despite herself.

Two days later Elmore unexpectedly appeared from Strathboro'. I was sitting wrapped in a shawl on the lop-sided old porch steps, watching the sunset between the two holly-trees at the paintless old gate. Elmore came riding up, managing a little flourish of a dramatic entrance even after such a journey. He hitched his horse at the gate,—he missed the luxury and effect of throwing the reins to one of Judge Kilbraith's negroes,—and came up to me with a smile like an angel's for sweetness and light.

"Are you enjoying the beauties of nature, cousin?" quoth he.

"I am watching the sun go down," I said.

He turned and looked long and silently, his soft hat in his hand on his hip,—you would have loved him if you 'd seen him,—and then he said, "I've come up to drink at this fountain with you for a few days."

That night, as I was roasting a sweet potato in the ashes and Elmore was attitudinizing and watching me, I said:

"We spent our first night up here with one of your neighbors; we got lost, and were taken in by the Nonlys."

Aha, my young man, so! He did not stir; his expression did not obviously change; but, more significant, he grew fixed and still where he stood.

"I was delighted with them all, but I fell in love with the girl," I went on.

"For the Lord's sake, Adeline, don't go to talking about Nonly girls here," broke in Cousin Nancy sharply from the other side of the fireplace, and giving one quick glance at Elmore; "there are entirely too many such around here. I should think you and Elmore could find plenty of Strathboro' young people to talk about."

My chief occupation this week was going on long, irregular rambles over the rough, wild country. The loveliest place I found was a little lonely, laurel-embowered spot around a moss-banked spring, where summer longest tarried. After two visits of course I felt that I had created it and that it existed only for me. How far egotism may mislead one I found when I discovered that it was a lovers' trysting-place.

I was coming through the woods with old Tige, the yellow farm dog, at my heels, when suddenly through the bushes I saw Elmore and Patsy! More than that, he was at that moment kissing her, and doing it very prettily, I must admit.

In such case there can be no question that it is the miserable intruder who is most to be pitied. Lovers are buoyed up by the complacency peculiar to their state.

They saw me when it was just too late. For some moments my own discomfort occupied all my thoughts; when I saw anything it was that Elmore was much disconcerted, and that Patsy, despite her conflicting emotions, was not. Patsy plainly felt that her blush at last was justified. She had not expressed unmaidenly emotion about an indifferent stranger, but quite maidenly emotion about her own lover, and amid

sentiments now she was shyly pleased to have things set right before me. No conventional views about clandestine love-affairs imposed upon Patsy; in fact, I don't suppose she had ever heard of any. All betrothals are, I believe, more or less clandestine among her class until actual preparations for the wedding begin, and the most advanced individualism regarding matrimonial contracts prevails in this otherwise unevolved society.

"I am very unfortunate," I stammered. "I beg your pardon a thousand times; but, as I have discovered the secret, I trust you'll accept my congratulations, Elmore," and I found myself with one arm around Patsy and my hand in his.

Elmore was very white, but he had an instinct for ceremonial that came to his aid.

I expressed myself quite sincerely in what I said. My interpretation of the situation was based principally on the absence of any shade of real mortification in little Patsy's pretty confusion and alarm; the alarm was shown in anxious glances at Elmore, and had reference to himself alone. She turned her face, glowing and dewy, up to me, and then buried it on my shoulder in the prettiest way.

Elmore looked dubiously and with some bewilderment at me, and then with a gleam of something like spontaneous tenderness at her. These occasional notes of sincerity in the midst of his unconscious artificiality always particularly aggravated my feeling against him, they so interfered with a ready comprehensible summing up of him. A man of straw it is easy enough to consider, but a man of straw with organs, passions,

affections, this is what tests the knowledge of human nature.

Naturally I took myself and the discreet Tige away as soon as I could. That evening, as the stars were coming out, I went and stood beside Elmore at the lonely old gate under the holly-tree. A whippoorwill was calling in the woods close by.

"Though I can't see any good reason for it," I began, "I feel dreadfully guilty about disturbing you to-day."

He turned with an uneasy look around and a softly whispered, "Sh-h-h-h!"

"Indeed, Elmore, you need not be so uncomfortable; I need hardly say I hope that I shall be very careful not to expose a secret I have found out in this way. I know that you must be meaning to act for the best; how could you help it with such a dear little girl to guard!"

He looked at me dubiously.

"She is mighty uneducated," he advanced tentatively.

"She is one in a million. She has an exquisite nature and a charming, rational, observant mind" ("much as appearances are against her in falling in love with you," I put in mentally), "and her beauty is delightful."

Elmore's pleased surprise overtopped other feelings for the moment. He had a great faith in my opinion. Had I not spent a winter in Nashville, besides various unguessable experiences in that dim, unpleasant, but impressive world, "the North"?

"I think she has a fine native intellect," he said

finally—he always wanted to talk to me about intellect. “But of course before I can marry her she will have to be educated some way, and then my mother would rather see me dead.”

“No doubt, but that is a reflection that belonged to an earlier stage of the game. I am afraid there are sad possibilities of constancy in the small Patsy, and that she will wait for you indefinitely instead of throwing you speedily over, as she should do.”

Elmore stared.

“Patsy is so clever that I don’t doubt that if you began tutoring her a little yourself, you could very soon help her to the essential thing—an ability to speak and write English as well as the people you’ll take her among.”

“I think that is probably a good suggestion, cousin; I shall consider the feasibility of putting it in practice.”

It was now dark, but I could see my kinsman’s melancholy poet’s profile cut against the western sky, and to look at it made me melancholy too. I was glad to leave him and the falling dews and the disconsolate whippoorwill and go into the firelighted house, toast my toes, and tell myself that it was not my affair. I saw that Patsy’s fate hung on painfully slender chances, and I was young enough to credit my impression of the seriousness of the issue for her. I resented the way I was disquieting myself on her account.

That resentment was rather gratuitous, for Heaven knows I ceased to concern myself about her soon enough. We came to New York for the winter, and

my own life closed in around me, and in two weeks all the world I had left behind was become like the creation of a dream.

The next summer we returned South and went to a little embryonic mountain resort where half a dozen old friends of my mother's, with their sons and daughters, formed the company. We had not seen any one from Strathboro', and Elmore and Patsy were still in dreamland to me, when one noonday, as I came out of the dining-room upon the vine-shaded gallery, one of the servants came to me and said:

"Merky's little Ellen say, Miss Ad'line, dat dere young white gal down to de kaleebit spring as is wantin' to see you. I tell Merky be mighty becomin' in dat young white gal to come up hyah to you, but she say dat she rekestet dat you be tole dat she desire yoh 'sistance. She done tole dat little Ellen huh name, but law, dat chile! she ain't got no mo' hayd on huh ——"

I got my hat and started for the chalybeate spring with a misgiving heart. I knew it was Patsy. Yes, there she stood, in a copperas-dyed cotton riding-skirt, her white, Sunday sunbonnet fallen back, as she strained her eyes up the wrong path.

"Patsy!"

"O—O Miss Adeline! You're mighty good to come to me. It were fearful bold an' presumin' in me to send for ye, an' ask ye to come hyer to me. I crave your pardon! You're so good! I've come up from the valley to speak to ye. I did n't know where else on the airth to go, an' I hyern from the preacher that you-uns were hyer."

"Sit down, Patsy — no, come; we will walk over toward the bluff; then we will not be disturbed."

I took her hand as if she were four years old, and, comforted and reassured, as if she were four, she walked with me. We sat down on a big log a few rods seemingly from the end of the earth, a great sky breaking through the trees at our feet.

"Now," I said, "tell me all about it."

"It 's schoolin'," she answered solemnly, laying her hand upon my knee and gazing in my face.

"Oh, it certainly might be worse. What is it, Patsy, dear — you want to go to school?"

"I 've worried Pappy tell he is plum wore out, an' he now say he air willin' to put me to school to git shed of me. Yes, Miss Adeline, he sartainly have give his consent, but Miss — Miss Adeline, we don't know the fust thing about it, whar to go, nor nothin'; an' ef Pappy have to worry about it, he 'll gin up the whole project. Now he 's made up his mine he won't begrudge the money, but I 'm skeered of his bein' worried. When I foun' he was comin' up the moun-ting, I put in to come along an' ask you to help me, for I never forgot how good ye were to me, an' how, though bein' kinsfolks to Elmore, ye pardoned me."

Her face, with its brimming eyes, was turned up to mine again in her own irresistible flower fashion.

"Elmore teachd me some," she said presently.

"I wonder you did n't make up your mind to go to Strathboro' to school, where you 'd be near Elmore," I said.

She flushed. "I reckon — I — ye see I could n't abear bein' there an' not havin' Elmore take no notice

of me; an'," she hurried on to say, "I could n't abear to let him make trouble for hisself by lettin' people see his feelin's as long as I am so unlearned an' backward. I make Elmore be mighty keerful—keerfuller than he likes."

We settled upon a cheap country "academy" in an adjoining county, where I thought she would be as little discounted as anywhere, and where the head teacher was an acquaintance of mine, whom I hoped to stir up to a little special sympathy and interest.

Patsy returned home that afternoon, riding behind her father, as she came; but she repeated her visit several times during the summer. That season had now sunk into the position of a mere forerunner to the autumn, when school began. I had a beautiful time overseeing her dresses and making her look pretty. She was a very superior sort of doll. Once she stayed all night at our cottage. The way in which she waited and watched for suggestions and examples of etiquette at table and elsewhere, yet managed while pursuing that arduous occupation to preserve her own soft, bright, unconscious bearing, was a bit of social skill such as a court might not match in a year.

I am aware how improbable this sounds to the unsentimental observer of country girls, but there was much that was childlike about Patsy—among other things, she was plastic like a child. Then, too, if she was from the backwoods she was also Southern, which in this connection means that wide-reaching, deep-reaching Puritanism had played small part in checking her natural instincts of social grace.

Our acquaintances were told nothing about her,

but they, particularly the elders, let her pass with a graciousness born of experience of life in a poor and thinly populated and aristocratic country, where anybody may be akin to anybody, and where kinship counts — a state of society similar to that in Scotland, especially the Scotland of the past. I feared, though, that the callow school-girls even at Coffee's Academy would be less elastic.

I gave little Miss all the points on grammar that it seemed she could digest, and she made wonderfully good use of them. One day I said, "Do you and Elmore write to each other?"

She colored, and bent over her sewing. The tears had sprung to her eyes, but if I had not been a brute in the way I watched her I never should have known it, she recovered herself so gallantly. In an instant she answered steadfastly:

"Oh, no. He writes to me onct in a while, but in course he don't like to do all the writin', an' ye see my letters would shame him, an' I don't want to make him consider how ignorant I am — when I 'm not there," she added, half archly, wholly pathetically.

She realized any meanness in Elmore's attitude only so dimly and confusedly that she could not be mean enough herself to give the charge a hearing. He was full of a sort of devotion and subjection to her spell when he was with her, and of course was assertive of his faithfulness in proportion to his own distrust of it. Of course, too, he was also proportionately anxious about hers.

"He keeps a-sayin' to me to be true to him," she said oncc. "I'd rather he'd feel sure without askin'."

She had plenty of dignity of character, but how was that to teach her to release a lover like this? It simply made her feel his neglects like wounds, without even the solace of indignation.

Patsy was far from loquacious, but at times when favoring conditions started her chirping and twittering she brought forth discriminating remarks. In talking of her brothers she said:

"Ab have the mos' sense, but what 's that when Eb have all the determination?"

I wondered how it would be when this coherent intelligence was brought to bear on Elmore's colossal incoherence on something like equal terms. Or could there ever be an approach to equal terms so long as he had those eyes and that smile? They even warped my satisfaction in declaring him a fool.

One day Patsy's father twirled his shapeless old white hat in his hands in uncommon discomfort as he said to me:

"I don't feel no ways at ease in my mine about this schoolin' business for my little gal. Patsy have the bes' head in the house, the bes' head in the house I allus say; I set powerful store by her; she could 'a' had schoolin' before ef I hed seen the good of it for her. Ef we could all be schooled an' live in Strathboro' there might be profit in it. I'd go through fire an' water to make that little gal happy, but I kint feel at ease in my mine about makin' her differ from all her kith an' kin. I don't see the nex' step satisfactory. I don't see the nex' step."

Sure enough, what would it be? In September my mother and I again left Tennessee. We went abroad,

and were gone three years. It was as if we had spent that time on another planet. Our foreign post-offices effectually estopped in our Tennessee friends any possible impulses to write to us.

After we returned to America we got an enumeration of events covering the three years, in four pages, from my Aunt Sally Kilbraith.

Cousin William Anderson is married to one of the Merriam girls—the second one. Abe Tuckerman has sold his place, and is going to Texas. Cousin William has bought it. Elmore Claymore is dead; died a year and a half ago.

Two months later we sat with the good Aunt Sally around the wood fire in her own room. Uncle John smoked his pipe in the corner.

“Poor Elmore,” said Aunt Sally, as she was completing a chapter of details about his death and burial. “You did not know of his engagement, did you?”

“No,” said my mother. “Was he engaged to be married?”

“Oh, yes; but it was not generally known at all; is n’t now; it’s quite a secret; but, dear me, I don’t see any reason for not telling you, so long as you don’t speak about it. The girl got us to promise not to let it be known among people here. She is John Penkerman’s youngest; Edith is her name. It would have been counted a mighty good match for Elmore. John made a deal of money in those Texas lands, and Edith’s pretty, but *I* never called her a good match for anybody.”

“Why not?” said my mother, with a courteous effort at interest. She knew nothing of the other story.

“Why, because she is a two-faced, cold, calculating little cat. She loves admiration and to show her power; that ’s all she ever loved; and she has n’t been any too nice, in her way of getting what she wanted, either. She had no brains; she had to manage her men—O Mr. Kilbraith! Adeline and Martha are prudent, if I ’m not. You might let me free my mind; they ’ll be off to the ends of the earth pretty soon, and what they ’ve heard about people in Strathboro’ will make no difference one way or the other. You see I hate the girl,—Lena, child, put your foot on that spark,—but you don’t have to stretch the truth to find plenty to say against her. She ’d been flirting with Tom, Dick, and Harry ever since she was fifteen; her looks turned her mammy’s head, to begin with. She ’d been engaged to half a dozen, more or less, but some way she did n’t get married. At last Elmore was put on the list; he was bedazzled with the idea of marrying Edith Penkerman. He did n’t know enough, poor fool, to understand that other men looked upon her as being too much of a belle. She and her mother thought, I reckon, that she might do worse; so they kept him in reserve. Don’t shake your head at me, Mr. Kilbraith; you know I ’m quoting your own words. Well, they kept the engagement mighty secret—gave Elmore some rose-water reason, you know. When he died, lo and behold, they were more anxious to keep it quiet than ever, and in less than a year she married this Tom M’Grath, who was hangin’ round her all the time, and is a better match than Elmore was. See? I did n’t care so tremendous much about Elmore; ’t is n’t that; but

that kind of a female creature, the smooth, pretty, plausible ones — Lord !”

During the week I learned that there was then on the place a negro woman who had been for years Cousin Nancy’s servant. Recently she had married one of my uncle’s hands, and was living in a cabin at the back of the orchard. I made occasion to call upon her.

“La, yes, Miss Leny,” said she, after seating me in her splint-bottom chair before a riff-raff fire; “Miss Patsy’s livin’; leastwise dat wah my information at las’ accoun’s. Dey do circalate de repohts dat she ain’t long foh dis wohl; an’ ’deed I reckon what she ain’t. Mighty funny, Miss Leny, how you come to ’member a little slip of poah-white folksy gal like dat all dis time, gallivantin’ roun’ de wohl like you is too. What Miss Patsy goin’ to die ob ?

“La, Miss Leny, she nebah wah no ’count ahtah she went off seekin’ lahnin’ at dat ah boahdin’-school. I know a ’ooman what hab a dahtah, a yellah gal, what’s hiahd out at dat school, an’ she say dat little Patsy, she say she wuk huhsef to def at dat school f’om staht. She study an’ study huh book much as any two gals, an’ not bein’ use to it, it woh upon huh; but dat wahn’t de whole ob what broke huh down. You know, Miss Leny, when Mahs Elmore die? Well, she home f’om de school foh Sunday dat day when de news come, an’ she ’sisted on comin’ down yuh to de fun’ral; an’ when huh pappy he won’t bring huh, she go an’ ax a place in Squiah Monsen’s wagon, an’ dey say what she dat white an’ still an’ cur’os lookin’ out ob huh eyes dat dey was sohey foh huh, an’ dey was wonderin’ whed-



"COUSIN NANCY'S SERVANT."

dah she was cahin' enti'ly 'bout Mahs Elmore, ah wheddah she was jes natchly wohn out wid school lahnin'. Den dey reckon she wahn't cahin' so much 'bout Mahs Elmore, 'cause she nebah cry na nothin' at de grabe—dat what Miss Monsen's Milly done tole me. But enhow she kotch cole on de way home,—it wuz cole weddah,—an' den she hab de lung-fevah an' spit blood. She got up out o' dat, but she ain't nebah quit spittin' blood. She boun' to die 'foh great space o' time. Don't you want to roas' sweet tater in de ashes, Miss Leny, like you use? La, no, Miss Leny, she ain't at home. She up on de mount'n. Huh pappy mighty exuhcised 'bout huh, an' he meck huh stay dah, 'cause she don' spit so much blood up dah; an' lawsy massy, Miss Leny, what you 'magine—dat gal, dat little snoopin' white-headed gal ob Tim Nonly's, ez teachin' school on dat mount'n! Yessum, she ez at de Ridge, whah you an' Miss Matt was dat summah. I reckon 't is quite poss'ble dat dat gal do know 'nough to teach dat mount'n trash. No, 'm; I don' s'pose she well 'nough, but Miss Monsen's Milly she say she mighty res'less tell she know she got dat school. Likely huh pappy ain't so much money ahtah huh schoolin' an' doctorin' to pay huh boahd up dah."

It was spring before I got to the mountain. The day was soft, though the trees here on the summit were still bare, as I walked through a demoralized bit of encroaching forest to the little pen of a schoolhouse where Patsy Nonly was spending her last stores of mortal strength.

The children were tumbling out, dismissed for the day, as I came in sight. When I stood at the door, I

saw her, little Patsy, half sitting, half lying, on a bench against the wall.

Yes, she was ill, she was changed, she was older; but what was the meaning of the exquisite, soft happiness illuminating her face through its weariness?

She opened her eyes — large and dark they looked — and with a little cry came toward me. The tears were running unheeded down her cheeks when she slipped into my arms.

“Miss Adeline, Miss Adeline! Ah, how glad I am you come; you come in time for me to see you. Now I can speak to you; I can speak his name, my Elmore’s name, to some one.”

She slipped down on the floor and buried her face in my lap. She did not know!

When she looked up she was shining through her tears.

“You must n’t think I ’m unhappy because I cry,” she said. “I ’m goin’ to him soon. God has been mighty good to me. But no one but you knows my heart is in the other world. It would n’t ’a’ seemed right to make his people mad at him by tellin’ what he was to me after he was gone, and it ’s been ’most more than I had strength for to mourn him in secret, and to look forward to seein’ him in secret also. But I ’m happy, Miss Adeline; God ’s mighty good to me!”

I arranged to return to the valley the next morning. I could not face this situation. For a while I was in fear lest in some way she should learn the truth. I felt that the opportunity for so supreme and humorous a cruelty was one that chance would hardly miss. But I drew reason to my aid, and remembering how

little ordinary gossip would shake her faith, and how short the time she had to live, it seemed probable that she would be allowed to die in peace.

Then — then ?

There is an interrogation for you ! I wanted to escape saying good-by to her, but after I was in the little wagon that was to carry me down the greening mountain she came for a last word.

She was worn and wan, but the look of a person with a happy secret was in her eyes. She carried a mass of the early wild pink azaleas ; she had gathered them herself,— it was a beautiful, life-stirring spring day,— and her errand was to ask me to lay these for her sake on Elmore Claymore's grave.

THE LAST MARCHBANKS.



“**IF** YOU will just step over there to Miss Addington’s desk, she will talk with you, madam,” I heard the managing editor say in tones a little more gentle than were usual to him.

I looked up from my half-finished sentence, and saw coming toward me, as if propelled by the wave of the editorial hand, a little, shabby, dainty, delicate old lady. Her white withered face was charmingly pretty in those fundamental lines upon which time has least effect.

Resentment swelled within me. The managing editor always put it off on me to deal with the piteous feminine non-competents continually trickling in and out of the office.

“I’m afraid I’m taking up your time, when you are very busy,” said the lady, with a gracious little

“society” manner, in which, nevertheless, a tremor of timidity and anxiety was all too evident.

Lo, she was a Southerner; there was no mistaking that gentle drawl on the vowels and suppression of the consonants. I shall not try to reproduce the peculiarity of her speech; the written letters cannot convey what it was, except as you know it already, and they seem to coarsen it.

She had a manuscript with her that she hoped might be adapted to the columns of the “Evening Appeal”; she always enjoyed the “Appeal” so very much.

Her manuscript was devoted to picturing details of life on a Southern plantation in the autumn. She had tried to make it timely; she had heard that that was desirable for daily papers. It was not about the far South, but told of things as they might be in Tennessee or Kentucky, the sorghum-pressing, and sweet-potato digging, and hog-killing —

“Oh, I know it all so well,” I broke forth.

“You, do you? Why, my dear child, are you from the South?”

How can I tell you all she put into those words? — the glad recognition of a matter-of-course friend and ally; the faint, half-tender reproach that I was so demoralized that she did not know me at once for a compatriot; and the surprise at finding a Southern girl there in that office, surrounded by men, and working away as one of them.

She, who had shown no consciousness of anything anomalous in my position before now, glanced about the ugly place, even at the upturned desk drawer I



"SHE WILL TALK WITH YOU, MADAM."

was using for a footstool, and put out a little, crooked old hand to pat me pityingly and reassuringly.

When she found I was from Tennessee, and that my name was Addington, we were straightway launched on a tide of interchange and reminiscence.

I was not surprised to find we knew all about each other's families: I had dimly supposed we did when I heard her speak. All Southerners do know, or know of, all the rest, and I had been given of late years rather to escaping than seeking those kindly intimacies they establish as a matter of course when they meet away from home. The exigencies of life had forced me to appreciate them more in the abstract than in the concrete.

But only a brute could have withheld a cordial response from this little gentlewoman, and moreover her name stood for a good deal to my imagination. It was, she told me, Fanny Marchbanks Overman.

I suppose she had been Mrs. Overman nearly forty years; but, being a Southerner, she was still to herself and her friends Fanny Marchbanks as well.

The Marchbanks part was what interested me. My grandfather's most intimate friend, and his partner for many years, had been Judge Marchbanks; and even in my half-foreign bringing up I had learned the traditions of that stout old Whig's loyalty and shrewdness and eccentricity. I had heard too of his daughter; had heard of her as the brilliant young belle who had been my mother's childish ideal of beauty; and now, after all these years and generations and upheavals, here were Fanny Marchbanks and I meeting in the office of the New York "Even-

ing Appeal," and she was a poor old woman wanting to sell an unmarketable manuscript.

That manuscript—the thought of it fell upon me like a pall. The worst was her confidence in me, in my acceptance of it; I had been stealing glances at it while she told me what a "polished gentleman" my grandfather was, and how smooth my mother wore her hair when she was a little girl.

I saw it would be as much as my position was worth to hand it to the managing editor.

I asked her if she had been doing much writing in New York.

Yes, she had been writing here for a year and a half. She had written some stories for one of the dying old fashion magazines; she had had a Southern sketch in a good weekly; she had sent some letters to her Church paper in the South; she had even had some negro anecdotes published in one of the "comic" journals!

I could guess what that dear, simple, girl-like old thing had gone through; the struggle and the poverty and the heart-straining anxiety it had cost to achieve this much. Now she wanted to do more: she wanted to get into other lines of writing, and she thought there must be a great field in the daily papers; and she looked up at me with the light of hope and the waver of fear in her faded, pretty old eyes.

A bright thought came to save me from despair—if only she could be made to share it. A Tennessee senator had just made some kind of sensation in Congress. I said: "You know Senator Lawton, don't you? Then why can't you take this paper and fix it

all up as happening on Senator Lawton's place — you 've been there? You can easily make it accurate then. You see, if you can make it fit in with something that is going on, that the papers are full of just now, it will go; it is hardly enough to make it simply about the present season, though that is well; but if you show what the Lawtons' home is like, I am sure you can sell it to 'The Earth,' and they will pay you better than this paper will."

She looked pitifully dubious. "You don't think it would be infringing on the laws of hospitality?" she said.

"You don't need to be personal and Jenkinsy," I hastened to assure her; "and you might write to Colonel Lawton for permission to tell about his sorghum-presses."

She smiled in a relieved, reassured way. She listened with deep attention to all I had to say. She had a wonderful adaptability; she caught a new idea as to what was wanted in a way that was highly encouraging.

"I know what you mean," she said, "about the new, curt, quick way of writing. I have noticed it in the papers, only I thought perhaps it was because they could n't write any other way. But I can try to do it too, if that is what they like up here in the North. And I 'll tell anything about the Lawton place that seems unobjectionable. I'm glad you think he won't dislike it. And now, my dear, I 'll take myself away. I am sure you are giving me far too much time; but you can just tell them, my child, that you don't see one every day up here who knows all about you

for three generations. Dear, dear, it does seem too bad to leave you here all by yourself so, and you so young. What would your grandfather th— But then your grandfather would be very proud of your talents, Adeline, and he was a man who knew that we have to adapt ourselves to circumstances; and I 'm sure these — gentlemen all seem very — very in-offensive.” And she overlooked the hard-working, scribbling crowd bent over their desks.

Softly fluttering over me in this fashion to the very elevator door, she finally took her leave.

I soon learned what seemed all the main facts of her little story; her great, tragic, human story, filled, as everybody's story is, with experiences at once terrible and commonplace.

She had been left a widow, with two little children, while still a young woman; the children, boys, had both died only a few years later, and she had spent most of her life as a childless widow in her widowed father's house. She was his only child. He had died near the beginning of the war; most of their property had been lost. Mrs. Overman had since then made what shift she could; and now, in her old age, with a courage rooted in inborn gallantry of soul, and also in ignorance of this rough world, she had come to this strange land “the North” to try to make her living by writing.

How foreign and far away this part of our common country seemed to her probably only a Southerner can realize. Fundamental ideas affect many ramifications of feeling as well as thought, and the weakness of the idea of nationality at the South sharpens many

a homesick pang in many a traveler and exile still in his own country.

That Mrs. Overman succeeded as well as she did was a continual marvel to me. There was a dauntlessness about the frail, delicate, lady-bred old woman that made me proud of the civilization — if you will permit the word — that had produced her.

I sympathize with the point of view that finds Southern aristocratic pretensions humorous; they certainly had far less basis of material splendor than the simple-minded aristocrats themselves imagined; and I doubt not that there is and will be in the future something better in this world than any kind of aristocracy; but for the blessings of a commercial democracy we pay a good deal, and my provincial little old woman exemplified the high-hearted virtues of the old régime in her union of fine pride, courage, cheerfulness, and gentleness as nobly as if her claims to blue blood were based on something more imposing than an ancestry of two or three generations of backwoods dignitaries; the obligations of an aristocracy were strong upon her.

I a little dreaded visiting her in her boarding-house. I thought I knew what it would be like, and I felt that it would be rather wretched to see her in the midst of its cheap frivolities and poor pretensions; but I found she had discovered for herself a place very different from my imagination — not vulgar, though offering hardships enough to such an one as Miss Fanny, as we must now in common friendliness begin to call her.

"It is a woman's boarding-house, dear; a business woman's house," she explained to me as we sat side by

side on an immense hair-cloth sofa in the clean, mournful, self-respecting parlor.

"Miss Mary Barnwell told me about it before I came on here. You never saw Miss Mary, did you? Your mother knew her; she is a lovely woman; she was Timothy Barnwell's daughter, that endowed the college in Wexville, and Miss Mary teaches there; she comes on to New York in the summer sometimes, and she stops here. It made me feel so much more at home to come to a place I'd heard Mary tell about, and I think it is very sheltered and protected to be in a house without gentlemen—when one is quite alone so."

It was a big, old-fashioned house, and the large rooms were divided up into long and narrow ones by wooden partitions; and each contained two little iron bedsteads. The inhabitants of the business woman's boarding-house were united as room-mates without reference to anything but a rigidly inspected respectability all around (surely none but the most respectable of women ever wanted to live there), but each was given a bed to herself.

Miss Fanny found it a little painful to explain these things to me, and a faint red spot came in each withered, delicate old cheek as she said: "It seems a little like what they call an institution up here, does n't it? But it is n't. The landlady is a New England woman; her name is Martin, and you see she has planned to have the cheapest place that—that—a nice person can live in; and you see it is n't so bad, for it is clean, and it is quite comfortable, I assure you; and you know you are sure that your room-mate is respectable, and everything is arranged for it, so you have a

great deal more privacy than you would think. I must take you to my room," she went on, "to show you my father's portrait. Oh, yes, I always have that with me; and you must be able to say you know how Judge Marchbanks looked."

"Of course," she said, on the stairs, "these Northerners are very strange. The lady I am with is named Miss Boggs. You 'd think she was — well, rather a common sort of person, from very plain people, you know, on first meeting her; but she is very highly educated; she is studying medicine. She has n't the polish one finds in our people, but I am sure she has a very fine character, and she is religious, and — and settled in her views; not in the least like we used to be apt to imagine at the South."

She was interrupted by arriving at her door. Miss Boggs was not in. Looking very large, upon the walls of the cell-like little place, hung the portrait in its dingy gilt frame,—you know the kind,—the clothing like solidified smoke, the linen as if molded out of vapor, and the flesh suggesting painted wood; yet the creature who painted it had not succeeded in evading his subject altogether, ample as were his incapacities, and something of the man, the large-minded, able, romantic man that I had heard of, was in it. I even thought I could see in it qualities I already knew in Miss Fanny, especially the receptivity, the openness to new ideas that made her seem so young, and made it possible for her to wage such battle as she had entered upon.

I could imagine, as I looked at the picture, that the Judge, if put down alive in the queer room, would



"MISS FANNY FLECKED AT THE FRAME WITH HER HANDKERCHIEF."

make some sort of intelligent effort to comprehend the conditions around him.

Miss Fanny flecked at the frame with her pocket-handkerchief, she carried me to one side and the other to see the picture, and she impressively told me the name of the poor soul who painted it. Then she sat herself down in front of it, and told me about the Polk and Clay campaign in which Judge Marchbanks and my grandfather had "stumped" the State together—trying politely but fruitlessly to remember as many instances of triumph and adulation for my ancestor as for hers. That both gentlemen were on the losing side in that contest had never occurred to her as dimming their honors.

I always remember her as she looked that day, like some quaint little priestess before a shrine. She sat in a chair close against the wall, that in the narrow room she might be able to see the picture opposite; her white hair was crimped a little and drawn softly back in a very good compromise between old styles and new,—Miss Fanny was not the person to cling to the old for its own sake,—and at her wrists and neck were, of all things, bits of "thread" lace. Her figure was girlish rather than otherwise, and pretty too, with its nice flat back; but the old black gown was skimpy and shabby, and that made me sorry, because I knew the little woman was not and never would be indifferent to her dress. As she talked away so proudly, so feelingly of "my father," I wondered what place in memory had all the rest of her long past; the wifeness and widowhood and motherhood, the common, blessed warm joys, and common,

crushing griefs that fate had bestowed upon her, and which, good and ill alike, she — so little and tender still — had survived. All seemed to have sunk out of sight, to be buried, and only the first ties to be still active and operative despite time and death. I reflected that after all she had spent most of her life with her father, that it was as his daughter she had chiefly found her title to existence, but I did not know at that time the thing that really explained her special devotion to him — the fact that she was then spending herself in his service, for his good name. The filial tie was reinforced now by one yet stronger, by perhaps the firmest of human bonds, that which binds the server to the served, and at last something like a mother's love mingled with the daughter's loyal adoration of the long-dead man.

I stayed to dinner with her — supper she called it, and in fact the bald little meal might as well be termed the one as the other; but she was unapologetically hospitable and graceful over it.

It was not till I came to go home that Miss Fanny's adaptability failed her. "O my child, I cannot let you go out into the street alone. It is bad enough for me; but you, I can't think of it at all."

"Very well, then, Miss Fanny; I'll ring for a messenger boy."

"What for, dear?"

"To go home with me."

"A messenger boy?"

"Why, yes; that is what we do when we are too proper to go alone."

"Mercy on me! My lamb, it is to save you from

messenger boys and their like that I 'm going with you myself."

"It is perfectly safe anywhere in this part of the town," volunteered Miss Boggs, a big-boned, dust-colored young woman reading a calf-bound volume at a drop-light.

"Yes, Miss Boggs, I know, I suppose it is, and I think it is lovely to see you Northern girls so strong-minded and independent. You could go anywhere; but you see Adeline was not brought up to take care of herself as you were, and I feel a sense of responsibility for her. I ought to be a fairy godmother to her, but I can at least take care of her when she is my guest." And she went on getting out her shawl, and settling her bonnet, with the cheery decision of a dear, damaged old canary-bird.

Miss Boggs looked at me with curiosity; she had not recognized me as a fragile young Southern blossom before.

Let me give myself the pleasure of saying that I sent my protectress home in a cab, a form of luxury which in the course of our acquaintance I found she particularly appreciated. She never became accustomed to the city streets, she went about always in a flutter of fear and nervousness; yet she must have done a deal of "going" to get together her little articles and sell them. I saw her down-town sometimes picking her way about among the rushing crowds and cars and trucks; going through the great buildings, with their incoming and outgoing streams of humanity eddying around the rows of elevator doors; and in the grimy newspaper offices, where the air was

tense with silent activities; and as I looked at the quaint figure, the gentle, half-frightened, high-bred old face, I wondered why she was there. She must have lived some way since the war; why did she not go on now as she had before, and satisfy her ambitions if she had them, by such ladylike efforts with genteel journals as she had made in the past, which had brought her much neighborhood consideration and a little money, and which did not tear her away from the dingy, dignified, green old home where she was born, and the simple, fixed, old-time life in which she was surrounded by friendliness, albeit most of the friends were gone?

It was gallant, yes, surely there was something to stir the blood in seeing so frail, so unarmed a creature take up the gage of battle against such odds; but it was painful, too. I all but resented the pangs she gave me. One day I said to myself, "This is worse than living one's own struggle over again," and that was a bitter saying. I was standing in one room of a newspaper office when I saw her enter an adjoining one. She went up to the managing editor's desk with her little soft, unbusinesslike manner, and seemed to be asking something. The man did not look up: if he had he surely would have spoken differently; but he was desperately busy, and he simply put his hand in a pigeon-hole and drew out a package of manuscript, saying irritably, as he gave it a shove along the desk, "Not a thing there that's worth a cent to us."

Oh, just the most ordinary business incident in the world; but poor little Fanny Marchbanks Overman!

She took up her papers — I noticed again how old her hands looked — and moved away as if she did not quite see where she was going. I drew back out of sight. There are some pains that sympathy can only double.

I often had Miss Fanny at the little flat I kept with a friend, a girl who painted and taught. She never came to regard our establishment as a normal one, and she always hovered about me with a futile overflow of maternal care that was not in the least checked because it reversed the facts of our relationship.

"My baby child," she exclaimed beneath her breath, as she first sat down in our microscopic reception-room and looked about her, "to think of your trying to live in all these Yankee ways. I hope you take good care of her," she said to Amy, patting me softly. Amy looked blank for an instant.

She had an air of relief as well as pleasure when she found me one night dressing for a reception. All her innate love of the decorative and romantic came bubbling forth. "Ah, how becoming that is to you!" she exclaimed. "My father used to say that it was a test of blood and raising for people to dress up; that if there was anything common in them it would come out when they were in their best clothes. And shall you see any of the gentlemen of your office?" she asked, in an elaborately incidental way; and disappointment was in her face when I said I hardly thought I should.

"And they don't any of them come to see you," she went on. "I suppose you don't let them."

"Dear Miss Fanny, it has never come up. I don't think any of them ever thought of coming to see me."

"Dear me! Well, these Northern men are beyond me. I never knew of any gentlemen before who did not think of paying some attention to a charming girl whom they had the privilege of knowing."

Amy, who was standing behind Miss Fanny's chair, turned her eyes and hands to heaven, and then for one instant placed her palms in an attitude of benediction above Miss Fanny's infantine old head.

"I suppose you have to have your meals according to these New York ways, with your dinner in the evening, on Miss Amy's account," she said.

"Yes," I replied, "Amy prefers it so." It was a safe assertion, though I had never heard her express herself on the subject. Like the true Southerner she was, Miss Fanny never ceased to regard New York as the outside, phenomenal thing, and the standards of Wexville as the normal and accepted ones, although in her writing she flexibly enough assumed the other tone. That was mental; the maintenance of ancient standards personally was inarticulately felt to be a matter of loyalty and character.

Miss Fanny and I each experienced some good luck about the same time.

The "Evening Appeal" found occasion to send me abroad, and Miss Fanny obtained a little regular work—the superintendence of the correspondents' column on a weekly paper. This brought her in only the most trivial sum, four or five dollars a week; but it did not take much time, and I knew from experience how happy was the change from total uncertainty to even this sum assured.

I hoped to see her make herself a little more com-

fortable and treat herself to a new gown. But when I sailed she came to see me off in the same over-brushed little outfit of rusty black that she had worn the day I first saw her.

A number of people visited me at the dock that day, and it has been a bitterly intruding thought since that I did not give Miss Fanny all the attention that God knows was in my heart for her; and it does not soften that reflection, but brings the keener pang, to remember that she was too much absorbed and delighted by my momentary social importance to have any thought of herself.

She went about giving my acquaintances disjointed bits of my history, personal and ancestral; and telling them with tears in her eyes how brave I was living here in New York, away from everything I'd been used to, and starting off now all alone on this voyage, though I was naturally of the most shrinking and feminine disposition. Dear Miss Fanny!

I did very little letter-writing during the eight months I was gone. I heard from Miss Fanny only once; but she was one of those who had urged that I spend none of my precious time reading or writing letters, so I was not surprised at her silence.

When I came back I went to the "business woman's boarding-house" the day after landing to look her up. Amy had just returned from a four months' absence herself — this was in September — and could give me no news of her.

The square was dusty and deserted; the house as I went in seemed peculiarly desolate in its orderly gloom. The servant was a new one; she had never

heard of Mrs. Overman, and an indefinite dread began to gather around me. I sent for Mrs. Martin.

She came in colorless, sad dignity, and stood silently before me.

"Tell me," I said.

"She died in this house three months ago."

She sat down.

"I am sorry you were not here. It was a beautiful, easy death. She was not sick. We just found her lying on her bed one day with a letter in her hand, dead."

In the midst of all the formless thoughts and feelings crowding upon me I was pierced by a foolish grief that my little woman should die on one of those prison-like cots, so strange and unhomely to her.

"The letter," Mrs. Martin went steadily on, after a moment's silence, "I had buried with her, but I kept a copy of it. This is it."

I half hesitated.

"I don't think you need mind reading it," she said.

It was very brief. In half a dozen lines Anthony Stottman acknowledged the receipt of a final payment of fifty dollars as wiping out the principal and interest of a debt of three thousand dollars left unpaid in the settling up of Judge Marchbanks's estate.

Ah, it was brief, but to what years of pinching and struggle, and high and tender purpose, that awkward paper testified. I saw all those years in a heart-bursting moment's glance. It was love as much as honor that had sustained little Fanny Marchbanks through that long task, so little in itself, so Titanic for her; no stain must rest on the great name her father left

behind him. Through more years than I had lived every hour must have been colored to her by this heroic resolution. It had become her reason for living. When she had accomplished this end, the shock of revolution in her outlook, the withdrawal of the great motive, had been too much; the light that had been sustained so long ceased. Mrs. Martin told me that Mrs. Overman had been restless, had almost ceased to write for two weeks before her death, although she seemed well.


Yes, I knew, I knew how, as with a child, the thought of her great achievement had absorbed her, and how she could not be at ease till the sensible testimony of it was in her hand. That brought her ease indeed. Truly it was a beautiful way to die.

"Where — where did you bury her?" I forced myself to ask.

"I was at my wit's end, Miss Addington. Those I might have learned something from about her relatives were out of town, and I did n't know which way to turn; but at last I put her in my own plot, where I shall lie some day myself. I thought you would come after a while and tell me what to do. She left nothing but a few dollars, seven or eight, but I had things done decently. I know Mrs. Overman was a lady, and that letter showed she was something more, Miss Addington. I was glad to pay her respect." Mrs. Martin concluded with firm downright reflections,—God bless her!

Miss Fanny had won for herself, in her last strange need, hospitality instead of charity, and with her letter on her bosom she might well be an honored guest.

THE REIGN OF REASON.

T will be rather a good thing, Adeline, if you will go up there for a week or two; it will strengthen me in that part of the county."

Politics are still eminently respectable in Tennessee, and my brother, whom I was visiting, was a candidate for a congressional nomination. He was encouraging me to make a visit to some kinsfolk of ours. He put forth motives of policy, but the truth was he was much attached to Cousin Betsey Blunt, whom he looked upon with pride as a particularly able woman; and he longed to have me pay her the compliment of a visit. Mrs. Blunt had been left a widow at the close of the war, with two little children, and no other dependence than a rough farm in a rougher country, some twenty-five miles "back" from Strathboro'.

She had taken the situation gallantly; and now her children were both grown, and her hard days past. One, the daughter, was married, and had gone to Texas; but the other, the younger, Jimmy, was still with her.

I had been at her house years before, when I was a little girl, and still remembered it as a sort of place of enchantment, so deeply and delightfully had its remoteness and primitiveness impressed me. I was pleased enough at the prospect of going there again. One of those queer little railroads that seem to wander so amiably and aimlessly about the rural districts of the South passed within eight miles of the place.

It was arranged that at this point Jimmy should meet me. When I got off the train I found myself on a moss-grown platform in the midst of a pretty woodland. While the conductor was courteously keeping his train waiting to inquire into my situation, a tall young man in a "butternut" jeans suit rode out of the woods, leading a saddled horse behind him. He lifted his shapeless, dun-colored soft hat to me; and the conductor, expressing a confidence that I was now "all right," returned to the care of his dozen other passengers. It was not hard, when I gave my mind to it, to recognize in the young man the Jimmy of old. His pretty brown eyes had not changed,—indeed you could see at a first glance that they looked just as they did when he was a baby,—and his brown curls had a familiar "set" on his head. They were oddly long to modern eyes (I insist that modernness is a matter of place as well as of time), but they were very becoming to his regular, nice, simple face. It was not a strong face: when I saw Cousin Betsey, I seemed to find its weakness explained, though not by the law of heredity.

The extra horse carried a side-saddle, and was intended for me. Jimmy had even brought a brown

“THERE’S A MIGHTY NICE GIRL LIVES IN THAT PLACE.”



cotton riding-skirt with him. I untied the various secret strings about my dress skirt, put on the cotton outfit, and mounted. It was in the autumn, and the ride through the mellow radiance of the woods and fields was a dreamy delight. Jimmy had the true backwoods capacity for silence; it is akin to an Indian's, and a thing to be much appreciated after the laborious twaddle of villagers in whom the sense of social responsibilities is painfully developing. After the inevitable exchange of inquiries as to the health of all our tribe, conversation was dismissed as an idle and exhaustive exercise.

I was too much absorbed in other enjoyment to choose that time for studying my old playmate; and I had almost forgotten that his powers of communication were greater than his horse's, when, as we came to the top of a little hill, he pointed to a log house beyond and below, starting, it seemed, out of the woods and into a big, irregular, unkempt field, and said:

"There 's a mighty nice girl lives in that place."

I could do nothing less than show an interest in a person so directly and impressively brought to my attention. Jimmy pursued the theme with simple pleasure.

"Her fambly ain't much," he said. "Her father 's only a renter, and his father was a squatter, but that girl is an uncommon girl. She is a well-behaved girl, and she 's that healthy and strong there 's nothin' she ain't equal to. She 's got a masterful head, too. Her name 's Ellen Tod."

"Is she pretty?"

"Yes, ma'am, I suppose she is," Jimmy responded dispassionately. "She's so counted; but her looks—her looks," he repeated, seeking a fitting conclusion, "it's not them I'm thinkin' about."

My less sternly disciplined mind was already wandering from Ellen Tod to the loveliness around me,—the blending colors, soft-floating leaves, and blue vistas,—and I let the talk drop. There would be plenty of time for canvassing the probabilities of a mésalliance with the house of Tod.

A mile or two more brought us to the home in which Jimmy was born—the ambitious house Henry Blunt had spent his substance building for his bride, while sanguine in his belief in the future of the country, and in his own. The piteous vanity of human foresight was emphasized when he was killed in battle a few years afterward; and the modest tide of sectional growth and prosperity of later times had, through all its variations, left this part of the county an unaffected island in the midst of it; yet the "big house" had not been altogether a bad investment. It had conferred a certain distinction on its inhabitants; through their hard times it had served as a substantial testimony to the dignity of their past, and as such Cousin Betsey had prized it. I remember as a child having heard my mother try to persuade her to sell out and come elsewhere, where there would be a chance for her to educate her children; and as I recalled her replies, while we were riding through the primeval woods which formed a rude park in front of the house, both their wisdom and its oddly antiquated quality struck me. She said that her children were

not very "smart"; that they were not going to make any great figure in the world; that the most education could do for them would be to make them as good as other people, to keep them from being looked down upon; and that if they stayed where they were, these points would be gained anyhow.

"They can learn to read and write here," she said; "and I don't believe they'll make much use of that. I'm not a fool, but I never cared about books; and they, neither of them, nor both together, have as much brains as I have. I don't know how it comes; you know what their father was" (I remember how oddly her voice broke there, and how it returned to its usual metallic vibrations as she went on); "but there they are, and such as they are I think they will be happier and stand higher here than anywhere else. As for me, I have to work hard; but I'd have to do that anyway, and I'd rather do it where I'm looked up to. No," she continued in answer to my mother again, "I can live here as contented as I'll ever be. I don't s'pose you know anythin' about what it is to me that my husband's dead" (her tones were firm enough now); "and as for my children, they are good children, if they ain't very gifted, and I'll leave 'em fixed in a way that suits 'em well. I've thought it all out."

In front of the house was a board fence,—it took the place of a decaying paling, I remembered,—and at its gate, as we rode up, stood Cousin Betsey. She was always a little woman, and the years seemed to be making her smaller. She was thin and dark, with straight features, black hair still unstreaked with gray, and the palest and keenest of light-blue eyes—altogether a no-

ticeable figure. She met me with familiar, undemonstrative kindness, as if I were still the child she had known. I think her manner would have been exactly the same if she had never seen me at all; it was not as an individual that she thought of me, but as the daughter and the granddaughter of those who belonged to the past. In my visits South I always find a great restfulness in this general predominance of background in what I may call my pictorial effects.

The house was just as I had seen it last. I remembered the carpet in Cousin Betsey's room, a striped wool carpet woven on a hand-loom, and I was pleased to find I still admired it. The same andirons I had left there sustained the smoldering log in the fireplace; the same simple-minded old colored prints of properly curled children and military and political heroes were on the walls; the "duck-legged" chair—it had sustained a surgical operation—still stood in its old corner. Doubtless it was a favorite yet with the small mistress, who had had it cut down for her convenience in nursing her children.

I flew to see if even a certain speck in one of the window-panes had survived the years, and was filled with unreasoning wonder and delight on finding it. It had been one of those queer treasures children develop out of the most untoward materials, and I had called it "my buzzard," Heaven only knows why.

"Yes, here it is," I called out to Cousin Betsey—"the buzzard Jimmy and I quarreled about once. I said it was mine, and he said it was his, and you spanked him and told me I was the one who deserved

a whipping, but as you could n't give it to me, you 'd have to stop the fuss by punishing him."

"It must have been Mary," said Cousin Betsey, with grim humor. "Jimmy never would have stood up to it if it had been his. Jimmy is a queer son for me to have. Most of his spankings were for not sticking up for himself. They don't seem to have done him much good. He 's as soft and helpless as men think women ought to be. I don't know where he 'd be if I 'd 'a' been that kind."

I reflected to myself that, in all probability, he at least would have been a more assertive person, the law of action and reaction appearing with peculiar obviousness in the relations of parents and children.

"But," Cousin Betsey proceeded reflectively, "everythin' bein' as it is, it don't make so very much difference about Jimmy. Sometimes I worry about Mary. She 's gone off, and sometimes it seems to me as if I might have done better by her — might have had her mingle more with other folks, and see more — if I 'd known how it was going to be; but I did n't, and what she is lays with her husband now anyhow. But for Jimmy, I want him to marry a girl that lives near by; she 'll have some land of her own, and I 've made this farm a good one. I have n't worked out my land like the men around here, and they 'll get on. Jimmy won't be as likely to throw away what he 's got in his hand as many a boy that shows off better."

"Is he in love with the girl?" I asked, seating myself for an interesting interview in the duck-legged chair.

Cousin Betsey reached for her knitting, and went

through some elaborate adjustments of needles before she said:

"I reckon he 'll be in love enough to do. He ain't egzactly an idiot, and the girl is a nice girl and a pretty girl, and she likes him. I 've seen that plain enough, and that is all I was studyin' about. Jimmy would never have stir enough about him to do his own courtin' anyhow, and he 'll be pleased enough to have a girl like Milly Giles make up to him."

The next that I heard about Jimmy's matrimonial prospects was from himself. He was going for a load of wood one morning, and I went with him, sometimes sitting behind the oxen, sometimes walking with him beside them, or making little excursions from the faintly marked track into the woods after late ferns in sheltered nooks or for seductive bunches of wild grapes.

Jimmy was as pleasant a companion on such a trip as the oxen themselves; indeed he was better, as good as a dog. After he had loaded his wagon, he sat down on a log to rest, gazing benevolently upon me as I grubbed about for hickory-nuts. I gave up the hunt, and sat down too; near by the oxen, loose from the wagon, were taking what pleasure they could under the trying, though poetically vaunted, condition of a dual unity.

"Cousin Betsey is talking of having Milly Giles come over to make a visit while I am here," I said. "Do you think she 'll come? Do you like her?"

"Miss Milly is a mighty nice young lady," said Jimmy slowly; "she is pretty, and she comes of very good fambly. But," Jimmy proceeded, hewing his way through these unfamiliar paths of expression

with obvious difficulty, "I don't believe maw means sure enough to ask her a-visitin' while you 're here. Miss Milly is wearin'. She talks a heap sometimes, and she don't have no trouble bearin' herself in company, but still she 's wearin'; and maw she thinks so too. I 'm mighty nigh sure maw would n't have her come when you is here."

"What is it makes her wearing?" I persisted. "Tell me how."

Jimmy seemed to sink a shaft into his consciousness and wait for returns.

"It 's somethin' like tryin' to drink the foam on the top of the milk-bucket—as if you might start drinkin' when it was foam clean to the bottom."

"Cousin Betsey wants you to marry her," I stated in brutal young fashion.

Jimmy took off his hat, scratched his curly head, and knitted his faint brows as he dug his heel into the mold and gazed fixedly on the operation. "Yessum," he said; "yessum, I 'm afraid she does."

"Well, will you?"

Jimmy looked at me as one of the oxen might if I had prodded him. "You 'member that girl I told you about the first day you come? I showed you where she lived? Miss Ellen Tod? Well," Jimmy concluded, seeming to feel that he was submitting a problem as hopeless as I was likely to hear, "I want to marry that girl."

"Oh, you are in love with her, are you?"

"No, 'm; I can't say as I am, Jimmy replied judicially, although the color crept up his face. "I ain't influenced by that; Miss Ellen 's a good match."

"Milly Giles 's a good match too, is n't she?" I said, when I had recovered from this blow to my romanticism.

"Miss Milly ain't what I 'd call a good match." Jimmy again drew down his faint, blond brows in the exertion of cerebration and expression. "She 's got some prop'ty, but prop'ty ain't everythin'. Miss Milly 's a nice young lady, but she ain't no worker, and she ain't no head for management; and then she 's wearin'. Where's the good of all that there land if —" Jimmy finished his appeal by implication, fixing his limpid eyes upon me.

"Most people would think Ellen Tod a bad match."

"That 's narrow-mindedness," Jimmy declared with uncommon decision. "Miss Ellen would make a splendid wife. If that ain't bein' a good match —" He again came to a full and impressive stop.

"But would Cousin Betsey think so? Does she know you care about — that you want to marry her?"

Jimmy mopped his brow with his sleeve.

"No, 'm; no, 'm," he said; "and for the Lord's sake don't say nothin'. I don't know what to do. Maw 's terrible masterful, but — but — Miss Ellen, she 's mighty patient, but she 's powerful sot, too." And with this pregnant suggestion of his own helplessness between antagonistic forces the discussion concluded, and I began to try to repair the damage I had done his cheerfulness by asking about his oxen.

Idleness begot in me a curiosity to see Ellen Tod, so one day I asked Jimmy to take me to visit her.

"I'll be proud to do it," he replied, without explaining whom his pride complimented. When he next

went to mill I went along, and was put down at the door of the little log house below the hill.

"There's no need of lettin' her know you are comin'," Jimmy had told me, "for she and the house is always as spick and *as* span as all the comp'ny in the world could make 'em."

The house stood an eighth of a mile back from the road, and a wagon-track led up to and away from it in a wide semicircle worthy a drive before a palace; it was all unfenced, the wild greenness pressing up to the doorway. As we approached, a tall, broad-shouldered young woman came to the low, open door. I had time to take a good look at her, and it was a pleasant exercise. She stood with one hand on her hip, in an attitude of such simplicity and ease as the rustic obtains only in his most uncorrupted estate. Her smooth, dark hair was parted and brought down behind her ears into a knot of eminent decency; her features were good, strong, rather large, and were set off by a fine ruddy complexion. She came out to the wagon as we stopped and put up her hand to Jimmy. "Howdy," she said — not smiling, but fixing her gray eyes upon him with what was like maternal tenderness.

"Howdy, Miss Ellen," Jimmy answered, equally grave. "This is my cousin, Miss Addington — Miss Tod, Cousin Adeline."

"I wanted to stop off and stay with you, if I might, while Jimmy goes to mill."

"I'm pleased to see you," said Ellen Tod. "Wait, and I'll bring a chair for you" — a chair to help me alight.

Jimmy was right as to the spickness and spanness of Ellen and her house. Her innate superiority was shown in her dress, which was of that standard dark purple calico which knows no North, no South, and it was made without a furbelow anywhere; it was a model of the chief garment of modern woman reduced to its simplest elements, but it was beautifully clean, and was perfect in its way, even the unrelieved band around the neck being becoming to so handsome a column. That touchstone of the Southern housekeeper, the hearth, was swept so clean that its scoured stones attracted the eye, and the big bed in one corner of the room was radiant in brilliant patchwork. After I entered, Ellen returned a moment to the wagon and shook hands with the departing Jimmy, who was to return in a couple of hours. For that time Ellen and I were left to each other's uninterrupted society, for her father was away at work, and she and he composed the family. She was a charming hostess, full of hospitality and with an effortless gift of silence almost equal to Jimmy's own.

She took my hat, allowed me to sit in the back doorway which looked out into the near woods, and brought me a glass of cool buttermilk from the bucket in the spring. My soul was satisfied when she got out a big spinning-wheel and went to work. I wondered if she spun when Jimmy came, and was inclined to think that no woman could be ignorant of the charming esthetic possibilities of the occupation. I could imagine Jimmy sinking into a deep and deeper daze of pleasure as he watched the swift, light-moving figure passing to and fro, while the big wheel whirled.



MISS ELLEN.

I tried to get up the courage to talk to her about Jimmy, but I could n't; she was too big and grown up; she made me feel too small and light-minded. She actually smiled at me, however, when the wagon returned. I felt now as if a handshaking all around were justified, for it seemed as if I had spent a pleasant, dreamy, drowsy lifetime in that back door.

"I ain't very lively company; I never was," Ellen said as I put on my hat, scarcely apologetically, but as if the fact were an undeniable drawback. She took Jimmy some buttermilk,—he did not leave the wagon,—and I delayed my appearance while he drank it.

"I don't know as I'll ever see you again," she said, as she gravely gave me her hand; "but I'm glad you come, and I wish you well. Take care of yourself," she said as we started, including me in the kindly gaze she turned on Jimmy.

I did see her again, but before the second meeting Cousin Betsey had learned of her as a possible daughter-in-law. I came in from a tramp the day before I left, and found mother and son closing a terrible and portentous interview. Poor Jimmy was sitting in his mother's room with his bowed head supported in his hands and his every line expressing crushed suffering, but withal hardly so limp as might have been expected. The little masterful mother stood with her knotted hands on the back of a chair in front of her, gazing at her boy with a touch of bewilderment in her pale, stern, lawyer-like face.

I started back from the door I had opened.

"Come in, Adeline," she said; "come in. Like as not it's no news to you that this poor fool I brought into the world wants to marry a low-down girl over there in the hollow, without a second gown to her back, and no more raisin' than one of my heifers."

Jimmy did not stir.

"If he could get himself up to tell me so, he's likely told everybody else first. You need n't say nothin'. I don't want to know what you know or what you don't;

but I want to tell you—you are young and foolish—that you 've done a right cruel thing if you 've given him encouragement in his folly, or if you ever do. I can't believe he ever would have named such a thing to me if somebody like you had n't give him some sustainment."

I felt a guilty thud in my breast as those luminous pale eyes fixed themselves upon me. I had not meant to give encouragement, but I saw now that Cousin Betsey was probably right, and that my liking for Ellen had helped Jimmy to the courage shown in this declaration; he had an immense regard for my opinion.

"James," she said, "look at me." Jimmy raised a haggard, pain-dazed face. "James, I 'm goin' to say before Adeline what I 've told you I 'd do if you won't give up this—girl. Will you give her up?"

Jimmy half gasped. "Mother," he began, then stopped; a dead silence; its tensivity was painful, like a physical sensation. "Mother, if you 'd just know her, if——"

"I knew her father and mother before her, before you was born. My father kept her grandfather from starvin' to death; more 's the pity, since it brings this shame upon me now. Her mother was a nameless brat. I know her enough."

"No, 'm, no, 'm; you don't. Ellen 's not them. She 'd make the best wife ——"

"Much you know or care about her making a good wife. You can't take me in. You 're in love with her."

"No, 'm; no, Maw. I 'm not that bewitched ——"

"Will you, or won't you, give her up?"

Jimmy staggered to his feet and to the door.

"Mother, mother," he repeated slowly under his breath as if it were a sort of prayer.



"IF HE MARRIES THAT GIRL HE IS NO SON OF MINE."

"Stop," she said. "Adeline,"—she took me by the arm,—“I say to you that if he marries that girl he is no son of mine, and I ’ll never treat him as one, dead or alive.”

The door closed behind Jimmy, and Cousin Betsey sank into a chair, and let her hands fall as they would,

one in her lap, and one at her side. I knelt beside her and tried to stanch my tears. Cousin Betsey had all a man's preference for an unemotional atmosphere, and the first thing she said was to tell me to bring her knitting.

"Oh, why, why," I said, "did you say such a terrible thing?"

"I said it because I thought it would stop him if anything would," she answered with a firm mouth, though her fingers were a little shaky as she handled her needles.

"But if it does n't?"

"If it does n't, he knows what to look for."

"Cousin Betsey, I've seen her: she seems nice; I believe she would be a good wife——"

"Adeline, get up; I don't want to hear any more foolishness. I'm the one that's likely to know who'd make a good wife for my son, if it's a good wife you are both so bent on. I've taken care of him a good many years."

"Don't you love him? Don't you want him to be happy?"

"Of course I do; that's why I've done what I could to stop this thing."

The needles were clicking well by this time.

"But if he marries, and you do as you say, you'll make him miserable."

"I'll do what I say. I've had to say it for his good, and I'd have to do it not to be a liar. Howsomever, there's no use livin' through the thing before it happens. I don't seem to see Jimmy gettin' himself up to go and disobey me. He'd never have the spunk."

And Cousin Betsey, with that almost appalling good sense so characteristic of her, insisted on returning to the serene tone of every-day life. She treated Jimmy for the twenty-four hours that I was still with them in exactly her usual manner, which was placidly kind, so far as it was anything, though it took less account of him as an individual entity than probably even the humblest of us, in his place, would have preferred.

Jimmy was much depressed, but he was in awe of his mother, and felt bound to pull himself together and respond to her attitude as far as possible.

It was an evident relief to him when he and I were once more started on horseback for the station, and he was at liberty in the woods, to be as miserable as he liked. He longed to have me do something for him, he did not know what,—say something, suggest something,—and he turned his dog-like brown eyes upon me with a heart-breaking force of appeal in them. But I was too conscious of the gravity of the situation to venture a word upon it. While we were waiting, however, on the little platform, with the falling leaves fluttering around us, he broke forth:

“Cousin Adeline, you can see what a good wife Ellen would make for me, can’t you? You need n’t say anythin’—I know you do; any one has got to that knows her. It ain’t that I ’m in love with her, like maw said. But I don’t see how I can let Ellen go. I don’t see how I can.”

I longed to probe his consciousness to see if any perception of obligation to Ellen could be aroused to reinforce his abiding sense of the necessity of Ellen

to him, so it was just as well that the rickety little engine came meandering around the corner just then; leave-takings and responses to the cordial, hospitable greetings of the conductor occupied all the time I felt justified in delaying the other passengers, and I left without committing any new indiscretions.

One day in the following April I was in the old flower-garden, wholly absorbed in the care of the camomile-bed, when one of the servants came out to me saying that there was "some mighty cur'us 'pearin' comp'ny up to de house," and that they had asked for me.

I did not, to tell the truth, think of Jimmy and Ellen, but when I found them, the moment my eyes fell on them it seemed as if I had been expecting them all along. They had refused to go into the house, and were waiting for me on the back "gallery"; as I came up their horses were just being led off to the stables. The look of people about to be married was upon them: I am a clergyman's daughter and I recognized it, even though I did not quite see why they had come to Strathboro' for this purpose.

Jimmy began explaining at once; he gave an array of reasons for his presence here, of which I seemed to be offered my choice. He did not want any of the preachers around his home to incur his mother's enmity by performing the ceremony, he and Ellen felt like coming to see me, they thought a little journey would be nice, and he desired my brother's advice about some matter of business.

Ellen put in that they did not want me to incur Cousin Betsey's wrath either; they had come to see

me, but they 'd go to the house of the preacher I should recommend.

They had, as I said, the air of people about to be married, but with a curious reversal of parts; Jimmy was full of the cheerfulness of a storm-tossed traveler who has found port, while poor Ellen's bearing expressed the awe-struck sense of responsibility which generally oppresses the bridegroom. I seated them in the dining-room at such a lunch as Aunt 'Merky was able, in her phrase, to "scare up," and went into a place apart to commune with my own mind.

My brother and his wife were away; I was alone in authority; how could I turn out these waifs to get married in the desolation of a strange parsonage parlor, when I felt sure that a touching gravitation toward sympathy was all that had brought them so far? Here was a chance to play a little part in a romance, to manage, to be important and benevolent.

I became infected with the passionate reasonableness characteristic of all the principles in the affair. I said: "Brother Arthur is away, he 'll not have to bear any of the responsibility; they are going to get married anyhow; Cousin Betsey can't hurt me; and, after all, Jimmy is quite right about it. Ellen will make him a beautiful wife—go to, I will be a patroness!"

After the ceremony—besides the servants in the doorway, only the most sentimental old lady in the village and myself witnessed it—Ellen had a little experience which I trust has never been repeated; she broke down from her usual care-taking, all-sustaining, maternal self into a frightened, helpless

woman who wanted to be comforted by somebody stronger than herself. She dropped down upon the sofa, and began to cry softly upon Jimmy's shoulder. Poor Jimmy felt then that matrimony was indeed a strange estate whose mysteries developed with incredible promptness, and in the most unexpected ways. He looked so pitifully baffled and bewildered that Ellen, when she saw his face, straightened up into her more characteristic phase, and slipped her hand into his to comfort him. It was not a traditional bridal scene, but it seemed to me a very natural and touching one.

There was nothing for Jimmy to do, of course, but to sink to the station of a renter. He went in on shares with his father-in-law that year, and lived in the neat little cabin I had visited.

My brother recently passed through that part of the county, and he reports that Betsey has taken the surprising but simple course of treating Jimmy as she might treat any poor neighbor whom she had long known, even letting him land on good though not unbusinesslike terms; but never breaking either the letter or the spirit of her vow. Amos thinks this suits both mother and son admirably. As for Jimmy, he says, he has more confidence of manner than of old, despite his social fall; and that he wears such a look of contentment as any other woman in Cousin Betsey's place would sorely resent.

After a four-years' experience of Ellen as a wife the one conviction of Jimmy's life seems justified.

NANNIE'S CAREER.



IT is now a year since I made my last visit to Tennessee, and I had then been away four years.

During the interval Strathboro' had gone over to the New South! I was surprised, and, it must be confessed, not wholly pleased. I had always supposed that Strathboro' would be the last place to come under modern influences. There is no chance for it to become commercial, and since the war it has droned along like a town in a dream. On this last visit I spent most of my time with Mrs. Caldwell, a cousin of my mother. When I entered her dear, big, dingy old house, by way of its absurd, majestic, wooden-pillared portico, and passed into its wide, dim hall, I was vaguely conscious of innovation in the air, and when I reached the guest-chamber, to which I was at once conducted, it burst upon me: here was the New South in the unexpected form of beribboned tidies, bits of draperies, things Kensington stitched, and a fancy crocheted rug lay on the foot of the great old

canopied bedstead. I was glad they had not gotten rid of the bedstead; it had satisfied my earliest ideas of splendor.

I looked about me in sorrow, for all this array of fashionable fripperies seemed as foreign and out of place in Strathboro' as it would be on a Mexican hacienda.

"I see, Adeline, you are noticing my new things," said Mrs. Caldwell. "I suppose you see such a great deal handsomer in New York; but when I was on to the meeting of the W. C. T. U. in Minneapolis I saw how pretty Northern women made their houses, and ours looked so bare when I came back that I had Nannie learn some such work. I can't do anything myself except the French embroidery we learned at boarding-school in my day, and it is n't the kind that's the style now. It is a great improvement, is n't it?—brightens the old house up. Your Aunt Evelina has prettier things than I have; she went on to Minneapolis too. She was a delegate, from Boontown."

"A delegate?" I was greatly bewildered.

"Yes, from their branch of the W. C. T. U."

"The W. C. T. U. what?"

Mrs. Caldwell dropped her one hundred and seventy-five pounds into a chair, and stared at me, wounded amazement painted on her handsome, middle-aged, aquiline countenance.

"Adeline," she said. "Adeline," she repeated, "you don't mean to tell me that you have no interest in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union?—you living up there in the North where the glorious work is so much less obstructed."

"Indeed I have a great respect and a great deal of latent interest, Cousin Anne," I interrupted. "It has not come exactly in my way to know much about it, but I reported the proceedings of the meeting in New York one day, and they seemed to me curiously important and significant."

"You did n't join?" Cousin Anne still stared at me in touching melancholy.

"Why, no; it did n't exactly occur to me."

I saw Cousin Anne put by the temptation to lecture me immediately as if it had been a palpable thing visibly pushed; she did it with a sigh, and then devoted herself to her hospitalities, as one who had long recognized that she lived in the midst of a stiff-necked and froward generation. It was marvelous to see how these Strathboro' women—an important minority of them, that is—loved this organization. It was everything of important occupation, of wide interest, of expanded life, to them. Prejudices of section, of sex, of society, went down before it. It was represented by women who could not be ignored or ostracized, and who banded themselves together for a sacred cause; and as they would do unheard-of things, old codes must needs burst to fragments, and the unheard-of be permitted. The men in their relation to the movement it was a joy to contemplate—there was something so primally and helplessly masculine and chivalrous in the big sheepish way most of them stood back, and lifted never a hand to stop proceedings such as all their lives they had declared, and believed themselves sincere in declaring, they would sooner die than permit.

I found my position in Strathboro' changed; hitherto, the fact that I was the daughter of my father and mother had caused the unknown mysteries of a New York newspaper woman's life to be graciously forgiven me and considerately overlooked, but now everywhere there was a new and vivid interest in what I may sum up as Advanced Womanhood, and advanced womanhood, alas! I was considered to represent. Our present concern with all this lies in the fact that Cousin Anne's eighteen-year-old daughter, the most domestic, conservative, well-ordered little creature I ever saw, was predestined by her mother to join the ranks of advanced womanhood, and I was expected to assist at the sacrifice.

During my stay with them Cousin Anne was visited by her sister, Mrs. Framley.

Mrs. Framley was generally spoken of as "a character," and she enjoyed living up to her reputation. Her own children were all sons, and she always tacitly assumed the absence of daughters to be a proof of her own superior good sense; but naturally this state of things gave her the greater freedom of opinion as to how less admirable people should manage theirs. The second day after she came she opened up the subject of Nannie.

"Anne," said she, pinning the shirt she was making by hand to her knee, and stitching energetically, "why has n't Nannie got some beaux? I've never seen a sign of a young man about the place? What is the matter? She is pretty enough."

Cousin Anne was writing at a little table, attending to business for the W. C. T. U. She did not answer

for a moment; then she said, a little stiffly: "S't' Ellen" (abbreviated form of Sister Ellen), "I don't intend Nannie to waste her time on beaux; she's got enough to do attending to her studies. I'm having her keep them up; I have not let her come out yet."

"Come out! m-m-m. You and I never did come out, Anne; but when we were girls we managed to have a mighty good time, and first or last half the young men in the county were courting us. If there is anything better worth a girl's while than that, I've never heard of it."

"I propose that Nannie shall find things better worth the while of a rational being in such a world as this," Cousin Anne replied.

"I never heard before that Nannie or any other girl of eighteen was a rational being. I pity her if she is. Do you mean her to be an old maid?"

Cousin Anne sealed an envelop with elaborate care. This was an essentially uncomfortable question: every inbred prejudice and many native sentiments rose up within her against the suggestion; and yet every instinct of expansion, of moral dignity, of ambition, tied her to the course she had vaguely blocked out, and it was certainly not a part of that program that Nannie should marry soon; and how was it to be supposed that the strange, triumphant, world-manipulating creature Nannie was to become could ever be accommodated within the matrimonial harbor? Something like this in chaotic, dim form distressed her mind, but she stuck on a stamp with decision, and finally said:

"I don't know whether or not she will ever marry,

S't' Ellen, but at least she shall have my help to become a noble woman, helping the world onward."

"A noble woman! O Lord! I'm a noble woman, Anne; only you'd never see it, just because I've got common sense. Well, well! Yankee notions down here must be a mighty sight worse than they are at home, for somehow or another they do seem to keep on marrying up there, and the girls have some little frolic, to judge by what I hear, before they go into the business of turning the world upside down. Are you going to make a preacher, or a W. C. T. U. lecturer, out of Nannie? She's got such a gift of gab, she'd do for either one."

Dear Cousin Anne's Roman features were touched with an infantile grief, and the tears came to her fine eyes as she said, "I did n't think you'd ever make fun of Nannie, S't' Ellen; I thought you admired her being so quiet."

"So I do, so I do, Anne," said the softened sister; "but that's the very reason I don't like to see her spoiled and kept out of her natural amusements. What are you going to do with her anyhow, right away, next thing?"

Cousin Anne resumed her air of dignified firmness, and replied that Nannie was going North with me for the winter.

"What are you going to do with her when you get her up there, Adeline?"

"Cousin Anne thinks she will have a good chance to look about her and choose some work or profession to devote herself to."

"Upon my word!" Cousin Ellen abandoned the

shirt, and dropped her hands into her lap. "Why, the child's got enough to live on, and I reckon that's all she asks."

Just then Nannie, looking very young and pink and pretty in her white frock, came to the door.

The mother gave her sister a warning glance.

"I won't do any harm," was the direct reply. "Come in here, Nannie, child; you don't think your old aunt will bite, do you?"

The girl put her hand into the one outstretched to her with the manner of a good child.

"So you are going off to Yankeeland, are you? and get to be a strong-minded woman, like Adeline here?" Nannie smiled sweetly upon me.

"What are you going to do up there, honey?"

"Mamma thinks I'll know better when I get there," said Nannie, a faint shade crossing her face.

"Go fetch me a drink, in the big gourd; that's a dear. Well, Anne," she continued, when the girl was out of hearing, "you and Nannie are about as precious a pair of babes in the woods as ever I saw. But, after all, Adeline's not as big a fool as she looks, and I reckon you won't do anything worse for the time being than waste money and spoil Nannie's fun; I don't believe Adeline's friends—the men all seem to be fifty or older—will be very lively for her. And I should think," she added maliciously, "you'd be afraid they would undermine her principles; there don't seem to be many W. C. T. U. people among 'em." But Cousin Anne had talked all this over with me, and had settled her course.

I wrote to my friend Amy Milman, a young painter

who shared my little flat, to engage a certain bedroom from our neighbors in the front apartments, and I came on North with Nannie.

Amy, who knew something of the state of the case, met her with maternal graciousness, and then took me aside, closed a door upon us, and asked what in the world I intended to do with her.

"I don't intend to do anything," I declared; "I am simply the tool of circumstances. Probably she will stay here awhile, and go home all comfortably enough and take up the life that suits her there."

"No, she won't," stated Amy, with solemn emphasis. "We are aiding — *you* are, that is — and abetting in unfitting one human creature for life. She won't belong anywhere after she's tried an independent existence here awhile. She'll be neither fowl, fish, nor flesh."

"Well," I pleaded, "don't try to wake up my conscience about it all, Amy dear; it can do nothing but distress me. I said all I could to Cousin Anne. I wanted this visit to be regarded as just an outing, a lark; but no, the child has been loaded down with the obligation to find a life-work. And by that her mother means what she calls a career, something at once dazzling and ——"

"What did her mother say when you talked to her?"

"Say? Why, asked how I should like to marry and live in Strathboro' all my life myself; and told me that Nannie is very literary in her tastes, more so than any girl in her class, and that one of her essays had been published in the Strathboro' what d' you

call it weekly, and that she loved to see a woman eager to help on her sisters, and ——”

“Stop! Do you think she’s got a bit of talent for anything in the world?”

“Not an atom, that I can discover, except—what is it James says?—the talent for being the nicest of little girls.”

“Maybe if she has not a bit it won’t be so bad. Don’t worry, anyhow, you poor girl. Go bring her into the sitting-room and we’ll have some tea, and I’ll give you some newspaper stuff.”

Alas! poor Nannie had never drunk tea in her life, and I think the very sight of us engaged in such a curious rite increased her homesickness. She was, of course, terribly homesick, everything—our little rooms, our way of life, our talk, the very outlook from the windows—was all so crushingly strange. She was benumbed for weeks, and her one comfort, her mother’s letters, were after all but a sorry comfort, for they bristled with questions as to the progress of her ambitions for the future. Poor Nannie! I think at last she began to realize what an awful thing it is to be asked to make a career offhand, as it were. It was worse than Miss Haversham’s demand that her little visitor should play. But Nannie was a self-contained little soul, and at last escaped from her worst throes, and began to come into relation with the life around her without having unbosomed herself to anybody. She came down with me to the office of the “Appeal” several times, and sat hours in that grimy sanctum, very proper as to attitudes and very natty as to dress, but she voiced no impressions, and gave

utterance to no opinions as to her fitness for journalism. I was bound to be grateful for that. She also spent hours in Amy's studio, and I thought it would be much better for her to go in for painting than for writing.

"Why?" demanded Amy, argumentatively, defensively.

"Oh, it will give her time," I said. "There is a regular way of studying it. No one expects to succeed in that at once. Her disappointments and mortifications will reach her so much more slowly. She could even spend a lifetime, under favorable circumstances, puttering away at it, and not be much the wiser as to her unfitness."

But she said nothing as to taking up painting. Cousin Anne wrote to me to ask if it was not time she was concentrating herself, if her life-work had not yet disclosed itself. I pleaded for time for her.

Nannie was too honest to play at a vocation; she evidently took her position with fearful seriousness.

It took me seriously. It was beginning to weigh upon me like a nightmare, when one evening brought at least the relief of fresh developments. Carlton Darby, a painter whom Amy professionally adored, and who took an interest in her and her work, came in to spend an hour with us. I, too, had a great liking for Carlton Darby, both professionally and personally. He was a big, simple, quiet creature, who never seemed to have discovered the fact of his own existence, though he had a delightfully fresh eye for the existence of a good many other things.

Nannie was brought in, of course, and listened with

her usual perfect decorum to the talk about backgrounds and foregrounds and color motives and modern feeling. He handed her a cup of tea—she had learned to sip that beverage by this time—and he shook hands with her when he went away, but he did not seem to have really seen her, a fact that is little credit to those powers of observation I have remarked upon. Nannie's perceptions were the better subject for praise this time. As I toasted myself over our one open fire after Amy had gone to bed, Nannie came and sat down by me. After gazing long into the sinking coals she broke the silence by saying:

"Mr. Darby is a great painter, is n't he?"

"He 's a mighty good one anyhow," I answered. It always seemed natural to talk Tennessee to Nannie.

"Does he take pupils?" she asked.

"Dear me, I 'm afraid not. However, I don't know but he might. Do you want to study with him?"

"It seems as if I must be making up my mind, does n't it, Cousin Adeline? Mamma thinks I 'm wasting the winter, and she counts on it so. I think I 'd like to paint better than anything I know of. Mr. Darby makes it so interesting when he talks about it, does n't he? He made me feel like I understood, though it 's all mixed up in my mind now. Do you think I could ever paint any, Cousin Adeline? I was such a good scholar at school, except in arithmetic and algebra: you would n't need them in painting, would you? But up here I don't seem as bright as mamma used to think I was."

The gentle little mouth looked dangerously tremulous, and I hastened to steady it with a kiss, and to

declare that we'd see at once if she could not have lessons from Carlton Darby.

At least that was better than having her plunged into medicine, which was Cousin Anne's latest suggestion. I went to see Mr. Darby the next day. Amy was so inhumanly full of her sense of the sacredness of paint that I knew she would be no effective ally, so I went alone to the pleasant old workshop studio. The painter, in his shirt-sleeves, opened the door. He gave me a chair in silence, gravely put on his coat as if he were performing some established ceremony, and then sat down on a three-legged stool in front of me.

"How are you, and how is Miss Milman?" he asked, after a moment's delay, when I did not, as usual, find a way to open the conversation myself.

"I wish you'd ask about the other member of our household," I exclaimed. "It would give me a chance to begin what I have to say!"

"The other mem—oh, the little Tennessee girl. Yes, I remember her now."

"Do you think you remember her well enough to be ready to take her as a pupil?"

"A pupil?—in painting?" The accent was not reassuring. "Now Miss Addington, you know—hold on, though, I don't know. There is a girl here, Miss Rosamond Giles—do you know her? She's got talent, the real thing. She's wanting to study with me, and her people won't let her unless I have a class. Your little girl would make a class, don't you think? I'd like to teach Miss Giles; I think I could do a good deal for her. She's done some quite stunning little things already. Your—what's her name?—Miss

Caldwell could come along and learn what she could. What is she taking it up for? Oh, well, I don't suppose it will do her any special harm. Send her along. I'll find out when Miss Giles can come. Her mother said she'd consent if I had some other pupils, and I guess one will do."

"Do you think Darby is at all in love with Rosamond Giles?" I asked Amy when I got home. "He seemed quite filled with enthusiasm about teaching her. He never thought of Nannie except as a means to that end."

"Miss Giles is a mighty gifted young painter, worse luck to her!" murmured Amy, as she went on making dabs at the canvas before her, and dividing scowling stares between it and her "arrangement" at the other end of the room.

Owing to Mr. Darby's special interest in Miss Giles, Nannie had the privilege of going to the studio every day. She spent three hours there, and the heavenly bodies were not more prompt and constant in their movements than was she.

I did not suppose Mr. Darby and Miss Giles cared to be disturbed by a visitor, and was glad enough to find a reason for dismissing Nannie in her would-be professional capacity from my mind. So, as Cousin Anne was satisfied, and the child seemed contented, I bothered not a whit as to what she was doing. I supposed it was nothing; but in that supposition I stupidly failed to take account of those powers of self-defense with which naturalists tell us every creature is, in some fashion, endowed.

About ten weeks after the lessons began there was

a rap at my door late one night, and Nannie came in, looking uncommonly blooming and softly bright.

"I have something to tell you, Cousin Adeline," she said, stopping in the center of the room, with her proper little hands clasped together before her belt, and her gentle eyes fixed mysteriously upon mine.

And, if you please, her news was that she was engaged to be married to Carlton Darby.

How ardently I embraced her, with what respect I gazed at her; I felt a sense of gratitude to things in general.

How well the old solution still served, after all. What a loosening was here of the hard knots which the march of civilization, the evolution of society, and a misguided parent had been tying for those patient small fingers.

Conversation with Nannie was impossible: she was mute and deaf, absorbed in her own emotions; so I tucked her away in her bed—she was staring out into space with shining, unseeing eyes when I turned out the gas—and betook myself to Amy.

Not to have patronized the enthusiasm that waked her from her first nap would have been more than human.

"My dear girl," she began, "do I hear *you* talking as if marriage were a convenience? One would think you had just gotten the eldest of seven plain daughters off your hands. And you always think so much about your social problems; this is not an answer, it is just an accident."

Then dropping this affectation of a coldness no woman ever felt at such news, she broke forth:

"But how do you suppose it came about? He certainly has not courted her here; I never gave him the chance—the few times he has come. I did n't suppose he cared to speak to her. When he comes to see you to-morrow I'd claim it as my right to know all the details, if I were you. He'll think that is customary if you tell him so; I know he will. But what are you going to say to Mrs. Caldwell? How about your stewardship? This is n't advanced womanhood."

I replied that at least Nannie had taken highly independent modern ground in conducting her matrimonial alliance; her mother would have to take that as her contribution to the cause of universal emancipation.

I did not derive much information from my interview with Mr. Darby. He sat in our little parlor, looking ridiculously large and radiant and quiet, and seemed to find all talk superfluous. He was as finely unapologetic as possible, but he did ask me in the undertone of an aside if he ought not to write to Mrs. Caldwell. Mrs. Caldwell gave no trouble. She took a somewhat grieved, reproachful tone for a time; but Mr. Darby was an eligible man, so far as Strathboro' standards could be applied to him, and the inherent delight of seeing a daughter happily married really overflowed all the superficial ambitions of her later years, and even, I doubt not, cheered her under the affliction of Mrs. Framley's satisfaction in the turn of events. She did write to Nannie and to me that at least in thus marrying a painter Nannie would be enabled to continue her study of art; but Nannie

said to me, with that complete conclusiveness that even the veriest mouse of a woman assumes in such situations:

“Mr. Darby does not wish me to try to paint if I don't want to, and I don't think I do. He wants to paint me, and he says a sympathetic model is half a painter's battle, and I would rather help him that way.”

Meanwhile Amy, roused to an exceptional and praiseworthy interest in contemporaneous human life, had speedily visited Miss Giles for the express purpose of hearing what she could of Nannie's courtship. Miss Giles could tell her very little; but this ignorance was in itself highly interesting, for she was just recovering from a four weeks' illness, of which, if you will believe me, the Machiavellian Nannie had told us never a word.

THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE.



It was in the old time, and it was the old story. A man and a maid sat under a tree, a little stream at their feet, and the lush summer all around. The land was wild and beautiful; the cultivated fields to be seen by a bird above their heads were only little, irregular islands grouped through the sea of forest. Near the pair—that is, not half a mile away—stood the largest and best farmhouse within many miles; it had a “frame” addition built in front of the older log structure, a big, rough, grassy yard, and at one side a garden equally divided between flowers and vegetables.

Two stout dames sat on the back gallery, one knitting, one with folded hands.

“I tell you, Betty,” said the idle one, “I don’t give my approval to the way you ’re a-lettin’ Lucindy carry on. That gal is the talk of the county.”

“Now, Sist’ Emmy,” replied the other in an aggrieved, long-suffering tone, “that ’s a turrible way

to talk; it's onjust. 'The talk of the county,' she repeated, flaring into a little unusual vigor of utterance, "sounds as if the poor child had done something disrespecktable, and Lord knows I don't know sence when there's a law in the land that a gyirl's got to marry afore she's ready."

"The trouble with that gal," said Sist' Emmy, "'pears to be that she won't git married when she is ready."

It was the belief of her relatives that Mrs. Emmeline Simms persisted in saying "gal" for the express purpose of mortifying and irritating them, and that she particularly loved to so designate Lucinda, Lucinda being the source of certain innovations in the family English.

"There she sits out there," said Mrs. Simms, pointing to the pair visible as small blots under the distant, feathery walnut-tree, "a-lettin' that poor fool spark her, and as like as not a-lettin' him 'p'int the day ag'in, and then she'll go kick over the traces onct more at the last minute, and—talk about bein' the talk of the county, do you reckon, Betsey Ann, that anythin' is a-goin' to be more talked about on the footstool than a gal breakin' off her weddin' after they've begun to bake the cake? Do you?"

"Now, Sist' Emmy," began Lucinda's mother, exactly as before, "you know there was mighty little cake baked; you'd jest come, and had n't fairly got into the fruit-cake, and Lucindy never let it get that far afore, and she won't ag'in, 'cept she's goin' through with it. You forgit the feelin's of a gyirl. They don't alluz know their own minds. Ethan Simms is only

your nephew by marriage, and Lucindy's your own blood niece, and my feelin's is hurt, Sist' Emmy —"

"Betty Ann, don't begin like that. You know I'm as fond of Lucindy as if she was my own child; but you never did have no gover'*ment*, and I do say that to have all this courtin' startin' up ag'in with that eejet—I think the man's bewitched—when it was scan'al enough to have the weddin' broke off after the invites was out"—Mrs. Simms stoppèd an instant, then escaped the labyrinth of her own sentences by cutting through them directly to the main matter—"The gal ought to be made to drop him or take him."

"Seems as ef it's more Ethan's business than y—than anybody else's, and he 'pears mighty anxious not to be dropped, whether he's taken or not."

"Humph! Ethan's a plumb eejet—far be any denyin' of that from me; but Lucindy is full as eager about keepin' him danglin' as he is, and you don't lift your finger about it. I don't know why the Lord sends fam'blies to women with no gover'*ment*, but he most certainly do."

Of course her own caprices were also being discussed by Lucinda and her lover under the walnut-tree. Truth to tell, these caprices had always furnished them with conversational material, a commodity which otherwise they often must have lacked.

For four years they had been "courtin'," and three times a wedding-day had been set. The last time, only three months before, the usual retreat by the unstable Lucinda had been delayed, as we have already learned, until publicity and general condemnation were its well-merited portion.

Lucinda now stood under the walnut-tree a lamentably attractive and appealing figure of a culprit. She was only a slip of a thing, though her nineteen years were quoted warningly to her; there were few unmarried girls in the settlement so old.

Little, tricky brown curls had slipped from the bands and knots she tried so hard to keep smooth; her brown eyes were swimming in tears, which were falling one by one over brown cheeks as round as a child's; she knotted her hands in her apron, though it was her best one, and just ironed, as she said:

"I do care about you, Ethan; you know I do. I want to marry you some time, you know I do; but — but I don't seem ready to settle down right off. It looks sort o' dreadful — everything all fixed one way then for the rest of your life. I like being a gyirl." On this last word this frivolous young person caught her breath and began to sob.

"You would n't think that a-way ef you cared for me," said the seated Ethan, gloomily, prudently keeping his honest, dust-colored head turned from the melting sight beside him.

"I would too-oo; a gyirl ain't like a man."

"No, 'm; yer right, they ain't. It says in all the books that women is withouten no heart, and man's destroyer. That 's the 'pinion of the wise men."

It was sunset before the two could abandon the delights of quarreling and return to the house. There the stir of getting a company supper made a picture of kaleidoscopic activity, half homely, half weird, against the soft twilight of the woods and fields; from the kitchen a broad, shifting flare of firelight shone forth,

through which dark, turbaned figures flitted deftly back and forth carrying covered dishes, while children and dogs of all colors and sizes appeared and disappeared on every side. Mrs. Todd, Lucinda's mother, treated Ethan with an effusive hospitality intended to atone for what we might call the heated indifference shown by her sister.

It shows how absorbing and delightful a topic was Lucinda's misconduct that this afternoon it had displaced the natural theme of the hour, and that a good one too. Mrs. Simms and Ethan were stopping overnight with the Todds on their way to a wedding. Lucinda was to go with them, and on the morrow the three were to set out. A horseback journey of thirty-five miles more was the price—or the premium—for this social experience.

"Ef you had any proper shame," said Mrs. Simms that night after the candle was out, taking an unfair advantage of the fact that she was sharing Lucinda's bed, "you 'd be too humbled to show your face at a weddin'—and with Ethan too! I 'd never show my face with you if Milly Anson war n't my own cousin's stepdaughter, and her mammy's fam'bly all bein' so dreadful thin-skinned about the way Sarah's kin treats her. Now, praise the Lord, this is the last upsettin' botheration Sarah 'll have to have with Milly, and she 's been trial enough, for a more addle-pated fly-up-the-creek than that pasty-faced gal this settlement ain't never seed. Howsomever," Mrs. Simms quickly added, remembering her text, "'t ain't becomin' in me to talk, long 's she ain't never done nothin' to ekal my own flesh-and-blood niece. I tried hard enough

yesterday to get that fool of a boy to go on with me to old Squire Hunt's for the night, but he jest vowed that he 'd come here or nary a step to no weddin' would he stir. He ain't no respeck for hisself. I can't see what use a woman 's got for sich a sowf mush of a man."

This bait failed of a bite. Mindful of the morning's early start, Lucinda was successfully giving her exclusive attention to the business of getting to sleep. She was not going to disturb herself. She might shed tears of repentance when with Ethan; she had none to spend for Aunt Emmy's delectation. Probably she comprehended that Aunt Emmy was well pleased at the worst. She adored Lucinda, and loved dearly to see her have her own way; her vanity was gratified for the whole sex at the daring with which the girl risked the loss of a lover, and kept him, and she had an unsurpassed opportunity for the dear joy of hectoring her younger sister—the poor lady without "gover'ment." In fact she was never better pleased in her life.

The sun was just rising next day when the three horses were brought up to the great wooden block by the front gate; and such a day as it was, all gold-lighted blue and gold-steeped dewy greenness.

"What 's keepin' Lucindy? Does the gal think we 're jest a-goin' to the fork of the road, and that she 's got halfen the day to spend puttin' a ridin'-skyert over her head?" fussed Mrs. Simms, as she gathered up the copperas-dyed cotton folds of her own traveling-costume and gave a final adjusting punch to the saddle-bags.

"Lucindy! Lucindy! come out here," called her mother, sharply, desiring to demonstrate her denied powers of family discipline. "What air you doin' keepin' everybody waitin'? Put down that baby; you're only gettin' him ready to cry when he sees you're a-goin'. You, Rose, take that baby roun' to the kitchen; now pick up that snack-basket and come along."

"She ought to be goin' to her own weddin', ought n't she?" said Ethan to the sympathetic mother, as he lifted his bright-faced, springing sweetheart into the saddle. No horse-blocks for them, if you please.

"I would n't be goin' ef it was my own; I'd be stayin', and I'd have to lose all this yer blessed ridin'," said she. That small saying was afterward remembered, and was quoted for years among the Todds as if it were a witticism; but now it passed without more notice than an irrelevant speech.

"Well, bless you, honey," said her mother, as she settled her skirts for her. Surely it was not to be expected that government should always prevail, and crossness be the rule of life.

Lucinda was not without a show of reason in reckoning this ride as a pleasure overbalancing the pomp and pride of matrimony. All day they ambled on, with only woods and fields about them, and were oftenest and longest in the depths of the sun-threaded, fragrant forest twilight, everything but the road beneath their feet untouched, pristine, primal, as if man had never been. Ah, who has such journeys now!

Aunt Emmy was as softly accommodating as poor Mrs. Todd herself could have been, and often covered

mile after mile, riding on ahead, without once directing her tunnel of a sunbonnet behind her. Lucinda's bonnet was generally hanging backward over her shoulders. Poor Lucinda's reputation for beauty was sadly injured by her brown skin,—milky whiteness was of all things most admired in her world,—but she took the sweet with the bitter, and absolved herself from the elaborate swathings and bleachings which were the community's chief tribute to esthetic interests.

"A little more or a little less don't matter when one dip more would have sent me to the kitchen anyhow," she declared, when entreated to return from the light of heaven into the cavernous depths of the prevailing sunbonnet. Even Ethan did not know she was a beauty, but thought it was by some special warping of perception that she seemed so to him.

It was not only in the matter of complexion that Lucinda was out of joint with her lot in life. She had a touch of imagination; had vague desires to see something beyond her world, to try something beyond, to have some chance at the unknown—desires which seemed all unshared by any other being. She was a world away from unhappiness; it was only by some obscure movement of soul that she was frightened when she saw the opportunities of the future about to narrow down to the familiar lot of Ethan's wife. That was the root of all this extravagant coquetry that looked so haughty; she could not have told why, but she was frightened.

Certainly she did not much consider Ethan. As Mrs. Simms complained, she would not leave him any

more than she would take him; but, truly, with the world as it is, and a bit of a girl with her life to shape with such a load of biddings and forbiddings upon her, who expects her to rise to fair dealing with free and sovereign man? Certainly Lucinda did not expect it of herself. She never dreamed of such a thing. She vaguely intended to marry Ethan some time, if — maybe — but — in the mean time she had no notion of permitting him to discover that there was any other woman in the world — not while she had eyes, and such long lashes as well, and was really very fond of the good Ethan. Pity him? What affectation! He was the most entertained man in seven counties. Moreover, he won the game; but this is anticipating.

The travelers went twenty-five miles the first day, and then, all unannounced, descended upon a “neighbor” for the night. Returned prodigals could not have been more heartily welcomed; much squawking and fluttering among the chickens roosting in the apple-trees in the back yard followed their arrival, and testified eloquently as to the supper that they were to enjoy; but our business lies now at the end of the journey.

Truly Mrs. Simms had expressed herself with her customary insight and exactness when she called Milly Anson a pasty-faced, addle-pated fly-up-the-creek.

On all sides it was felt as an especial evidence of providential consideration that Milly had gotten a husband — or the promise of one. Here again I see strange evidence of the absence of just consideration for the masculine part of the race. No one could regard it as good fortune for a man to have Milly An-

son as a wife, but his immediate female relatives alone were occupied with his fate.

Milly was now swimming in all the importance of the occasion — an importance which too often unduly elates the most pleasing woman, and which affected Milly in a way and degree well fitted to madden any observer — especially if she were an unmarried woman.

The most famous cake-maker of the county, who had been lording it in the kitchen for a week, was by no means unmarried, and she had the toleration born of a large experience of brides elect; yet even she found Milly unendurable.

“I have been asked to bake the cake at eleben weddin’s sence I married my fust husband,” said she, afterward, “not only for my own kin but among the Gileses and Simmonses and down to Strathboro’ and over the Ridge, and I’ve seen a heap of fool gyirls, but I ’ll gin up that Milly Anson that week was a notch beyond any on ’em. I stood her jest as long as I could, and at last I broke out on her. It was jest the day before the thing was to come off, and she kep’ teeterin’ and titterin’ in and out, a-jarrin’ the floor and makin’ my heart come in my mouth for fear my last big pound-cake in the oven would fall, and I’d told her more ’n a dozen times that very day to stay in the house; but no, sir, she would keep comin’ to say how strange her feelin’s was, and that she knew she never could l’arn Tummas’s ways, and she never would’d done it ef Tummas had n’t pestered her into it,—Tom Simmons! Lor’!—and lastly she bounced in on to me, catchin’ hold o’ me, and me with my hands all in the flour, and says she, ‘O Cousin Liz, I ’m so skeered! I ’m gettin’ so skeered!’ says she. Now it’s

my conviction that she 'd made up her mind then as to what she was goin' to do, and was sure enough gettin' a little fidgety; but in course I never had no such reflection then, and I 'd had all I could stomach. 'Milly Anson,' says I, 'there 's no need of your bein' any bigger eejet then the Lord made you; stop a-clutchin' on to me. I 'm wore out with your pertenses. Ef Tom Simmons 'll marry you, more fool he; but you better have a thankful heart, and I reckon you have. As for bein' skeered, I wish you was skeered enough to break your appetite, and stop you from eatin' them snowballs fast as I git the frostin' on 'em. You're a livin' example of the truth of the Bible and the wisdom of King Solomon,' says I; 'for he tells how the yearth is disquieted for three things, yea, four which it cannot bear,' says I,—for I seen that quotin' the Bible ag'in' her was strikin' her mor'n anythin' else,—'a servant when he reigneth,' I went on, 'a fool when he 's filled with meat, an handmaiden that 's heir to her mistress, and an ojeous woman when she 's married, or thinks she 's goin' to be. It's the same thing. And now ef you think I made that up out 'n my own head, you go 'n' read your Bible long enough and you 'll l'arn better. 'T any rate, git back to the house, and don't you step your foot into this kitchen ag'in,' says I, 'for,' says I, hollerin' after her,—she 'd done started, tryin' to keep laughin', like 't was a joke,—'ef you does,' says I, 'nary a table will I set for you. I 'm tellin' you the truth, and you know what things is likely to be withouten me,' says I."

The famous cake-maker had relieved herself, but truth and scripture still failed to make a new Milly,

as a little time was to show. It was the afternoon of the wedding-day when Lucinda arrived; the ceremony was to be performed that evening. The house was already full of guests, and was like a hive of swarming bees, such a buzzing, and hurrying, and scurrying was there, for toilets were in the making, and many a white dress, brought, like Lucinda's own, in saddle-bags, must now be ironed out, be the kitchen-quarters filled with never so much anxiety and turmoil of their own.

The men, more or less unhappy and stranded, tried to keep out of the way, and stayed chiefly out of doors. Despite intermittent, decorous efforts to save himself for the great moment, the bridegroom was painfully conspicuous among them, being a marked and solitary man by reason of his "store" clothes.

Ethan Simms was exactly the sort of male creature that looks upon such eminence as a thing hard to bear; but now, as the common fate of bridegrooms, he gazed at that long-tailed, brass-buttoned blue coat with heavy-hearted envy. He was sadly depressed about his love-affair. He was an excellent fellow, and there is evidence of it in the fact that he had moments of sympathizing with Lucinda's reluctance to marry him.

"Marvel is that she ever thinks she will," he would say to himself. But final reflections always supported him in his desires, as is the way with final reflections, and he would conclude that nothing better than wedding him was likely to come to her. That he argued it out with his passion shows the reasonable temper of the man, and who would have liked him better

for arriving at any other conclusion? Certainly no woman.

Twilight found him sitting alone on the fence, smoking, and meditating means for bringing Lucinda to the altar.

"Ef it ware once done," he said to himself, as he brought his long legs to the ground, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and returned it to his pocket, "she 'd be better content nor she is now; but she is that skittish, and she sees through me that quick, that I don't know to the Lawd what sort o' devices to fall upon!"

In the house the candles were now lighted. Sleek-ringed young women came forth in groups, family potentates disappeared, the store-clothed bridegroom was fellowed a moment by the arriving parson, and then he too became invisible. The air was tense with expectation. Low, eager talk about tucks and embroidery, "fine swiss" and "clocked stockings," was drawing the women's heads together. Finally this died out. The parson was spirited away to the fateful upper regions. Still no bride and bridegroom: the delay was extraordinary. Opinions that it was outrageous were brewing; for supper, you see, was still to come. An odd uneasiness was in the air. In fact, to make a long story short, Milly Anson had chosen this hour to declare that she would not be married to Thomas Simmons, not she!

Tears, revilings, corporal shakings, threats of immediate death from her father, given with a truly awful sincerity of mien, all availed nothing. Milly was a weak creature, and had capacities for stubbornness

to be found in no other. She had long dreamed of following in Lucinda's footsteps. The notoriety which had been thrust upon Lucinda by the gossip-starved community shone before her as a prize to be achieved; and moreover, there was a half-covert and most reprehensible relish in the men's talk about that young damsel's frowardness that acted as a bellows upon the flame of folly in Milly's bosom. At last she had seized her opportunity, she was capping all that had ever been heard of reluctant maidens. When the storm broke over her she was frightened; things did not seem exactly as she had forecast. "Tummas," for instance, was unbecomingly inexpressive and inactive amid all these violent energies; but, partly because she was frightened, she clung immovably to the one thing that in all the confusion she seemed able to grasp—the course of conduct marked out in happier moments. Her poor little aborted powers of reasoning had of course left her at the first onslaught, and now to give way seemed to her darkened consciousness to be abandoning her only plank amid the whirling waters.

Imagine Lucinda's feelings. A well of bitterness were they within her, as she sat trying to look unconscious of any special relation to the catastrophe, while the company ebbed and surged about her in suppressed but delicious excitement. But even now, from all sides, she felt eyes turning upon her; to be forever bracketed with this fool was sickening. And peppering her other emotions was undeniably a sense of infringement—Milly Anson of all people to imitate her!

At last such guests as could leave that night tore themselves away. Our trio were not among them. Till morning they must spend the weary, broken, dream-haunted hours in the midst of the shattered household. They kept apart, and spoke little. Lucinda writhed to see how plainly her aunt and Ethan recognized the special shame for their little party in this bigger shame, and how plainly they showed their recognition. She denied to herself first its existence, and then its justice, and denounced Aunt Emmy and Ethan for a "pair of ninnies, goin' round with their heads hangin' 'bout somethin' they had nothin' in this mortal world to do with." Yes, it was true; for once other considerations outweighed Aunt Emmy's appetite for sensation, and she was humbled.

Lucinda got up at dawn; she was pale, and her mouth was shut with a firmness quite absurd on such a becurved little face. Before the sun rose she succeeded in getting hold of Ethan; she dragged him out of doors and into the dewy grass for private converse. The sleepiness left his eyes when she faced him and said fiercely, "I want to go to Strathboro' and git married—just as soon as you can saddle up."

The poor man's head whirled; a hundred things seeming to demand consideration and time sprang to his mind, and withal his arms ached to catch this small Amazon off the ground and to his breast. But he was a wise one, was Ethan; he held himself quite still—as he might if a bird had lighted on his head—until he could answer quietly that he 'd go right off and see about the horses.

"You tell Aunt Emmy," said Lucinda, airily.

"Lord a'mighty!" broke forth Aunt Emmy in tones of real irritation, dropping into a chair in the deserted best room, "I never hearn of anythin' so outdacious in all my days. Let her come home and be married like a Christian. I should think we 'd had enough crazy Janein' to do us the rest of our born lives. I ain't goin' to have her mammy sayin' I—"

"Good Gawd!" broke in Ethan, "have I got to go and co'te you as long as I been co'tin' Lucindy 'fore I kin git married? Can't you see, Aunt Em, that I das n't stand foolin' and argufyin' with that gyrl? Don't you know I 've got to take her when I can git her? An' ef it ain't now, there 's no sayin' on the wide yearth when 't will be. Lawd! Lawd!"

Ethan mopped his brow on his sleeve. "Shorely, shorely, Aunt Em, 't ain't goin' to be you as 'll knock over the bucket altogether? There 's no tellin' what Lucindy 'll do next, ef she's riled. Bless you; thanky, thanky! Don't say nothin' to her; don't say nothin' no way; jest help her to git ready as ef she got married at Strathboro' every day in the week."

It is pleasant to know that in this case too the impossible became possible, and that, 'twixt nature, use, and honest purposes, Lucinda's marriage was not a failure, and that she, selfish human that she was, never regretted an experiment which cost poor Milly Anson dear indeed; for only after years of obloquy and sorrow, vain efforts and journeyings to the "Eelynois,"—a far country,—was a husband for her at last secured.

RUDOLPH.

There was the Door to which I found no Key,
There was the Veil through which I could not see.

OMAR KHAYYÁM.



WE are taught, I believe, by the best critical authority that the essence of tragedy lies in the conflict of Will and Fate, or rather in the victory of Fate over the more or less consciously struggling individual; and that the catastrophe, to be truly Greek, must in some way result from deeds morally significant. But is there not an appallingly tragic element in the action of Fate, when, as we so often know it, the catastrophe has no relation to responsibilities anywhere; when it is but a blind bolt, falling blindly, stopping, crushing, annihilating, without more moral significance than is in the rain which falls alike on the just and on the unjust? Is it not because this is too appalling, because it frightens us as children are frightened in the dark, that we cling

so closely to those instances of human history in which deed and doom are bound together by brief and simple sequences?

It is a very unimposing little figure that is most deeply associated in my mind with that other and more mysterious tragedy, in which the fine, and sane, and true are overpowered by that blank, meaningless, and terrible power we call Chance.

One spring day, years ago, it happened that for a few hours I, myself only a school-girl, was given charge of an unfamiliar village school. It was in a mongrel Southern mountain town, where some coal-mines were lamely contributing to the foundations of that New South which as yet the Old South scarcely grudgingly admitted as a possibility. The school was made up of such a variety of elements as probably could not have been matched, at that time, in any school-room south of the Ohio River. There were "Yankee" children from the East and the West, mountain-born and Southern-born children (the mountaineer is Southern only in a shallow geographical sense), even children with a brogue and a touch of broad Lancashire dialect; but in this crowd, so heterogeneous for the South, so homogeneous compared to the mixtures the North is forced to venture upon, there was but one child who spoke the English language with a foreign accent.

To me, as I struggled with the opening class, they all seemed conspicuously united by a common dullness. This class was of the older scholars, and they were studying "Peter Parley's Universal History,"—that absurd yet admirable little book, superseded, generations ago, everywhere but in forgotten and benighted Southern nooks by works paralyzingly full and distressingly accurate. The lesson was about Prussia. That torpor which nature enables all but the liveliest children to take on, as a protection against the horrors of the school-room, pervaded the class; the big girls and boys sat about in attitudes of heavy woodenness, answering questions, when they could answer them at all, as if badly constructed, insufficient machinery were for the moment put in motion. I was casting about in my mind as to what would bring them to life, when, as I quoted something from the lesson about the King of Prussia (the book dated much further back than the seventies), I heard the shyest, softest, eagerest young voice say,—as if the barriers of repression had perforce given way,—
"He 's Emperor now."

I turned to see to whom all these lesson-words meant facts, thoughts, something else than gibberish, with a sense of unreasonably grateful refreshment. There he was, a broad-shouldered, dark-eyed little boy, about twelve years old, who was seated, when school opened, half-way back in the long, grimy room, but who was now wriggling with vitality, suppressed interest, and an overpowered but abiding sense of misconduct, on a seat just behind the recitation-benches,—drawn there, evidently, by a force similar in its imperiousness to gravitation itself.

"He 's Dutch," remarked a boy in the class, in a tone explanatory, but not lowered.

"What 's your name?" I asked.

"Rudolph, ma'am." (It seemed that, for purposes of convenience, the regular teacher had found "Rudolph" name enough, and had pointedly refused to struggle with further Teutonic syllables.)

"Well, Rudolph, come out here, and tell these big boys and girls about how the King came to be made Emperor. Come, sit there."

But Rudolph had found an opportunity for something more dear than humiliating others. His bright dark eyes were fastened upon me as he slipped from the one seat into the other, saying, "The war it was that made so, was not? The Emperor is bigger than the King? They want the German—the German one to be big, my father say. Who—how it come done—what Herr Bismarck do?"

The child sat on the edge of the bench, bending toward me as he poured forth his questions, as if the major part of his young life had hitherto been spent in a fruitless search for the facts of the German consolidation. I listened, divided betwixt admiration and terror. Needless to say, I did not find time to satisfy all his exhaustive questionings, but I told him to come and see me after school, and we would see what we could do. Before the class was dismissed I found that there was nothing very special in Rudolph's interest in the Emperor and Bismarck; that he brought this same insatiable curiosity, this same large, intelligent comprehension of the existence of uncomprehended causes, to other subjects.

Before noon I was enjoying quite a delightful small excitement about the child. What so thrilling as discovery, and what discovery so thrilling as to find a mind? Rudolph came into two more classes: one in spelling, where he was recklessly and hopelessly rational and consistent; and one struggling with the tedium of long division, where he was slow, patient, and sorely afflicted. At noon my little brief authority ended. I left Rudolph plunging about the playground in a game of "base,"—rather clumsy, something of a butt in the sport, and perfectly hearty and good-natured.

Before he came to me in the afternoon I had learned something about him. He was known among the men of our household, I found, through his habit of "hanging around" where any talk about the mines was going on, and, oddly enough, because of his notably courteous ways at the post-office and the "store," places where the miners were given to tacitly asserting their superiority to all other classes. His father and mother were Germans, I was first told; but Jim, a small cousin, said the father was "half Eyetalian," and further informed me that Rudolph was "no good," that he could n't catch a ball.

"But he's very nice and good-natured, is n't he?" I inquired, weakly longing to hear only praises of my discovery.

My young man stared. "Yaw," he drawled, in uncomprehending derision, and disappeared around the corner of the porch on his hands.

I was sitting on the porch when Rudolph came,—a little awkward, but withal much more pleased than

shy, stopping to wipe his bare feet on the grass, and before he was fairly under the roof taking off his shapeless rag of a hat, with a bright smile of greeting. I had gathered together some old illustrated papers of the time of the Franco-Prussian war; he fell upon them.

"I before one did see, a long time; it had a picture of another Emperor, Max—Maxmillan? he that was killed, is it not so? How—how could that come when he was Emperor? Was he not the biggest?"

Rudolph soon recognized the necessity of limiting his field of research, and began to put me through a most exhaustive examination on Franco-German politics. He did not find me altogether satisfactory; my knowledge was too superficial and too qualified. He caught continually at main lines of causation, which could be followed only by going far afield.

"Why wished the French Emperor to fight?" he finally asked, with a touch of sternness, when I had tried to describe the diplomatic pretenses by which the war was precipitated.

"People thought that he was afraid the French nation were getting tired of him, that they might begin to ask again why he should be Emperor; and so he wanted to give them something else to think about, and to please them by making them victorious."

Rudolph pondered. "You know not surely?"

"No; of course he would not say things like that, nor would the men who worked for him, even if they believed they knew his thoughts."

"It must been something that way, is it not? You think it would been better he not try and be smart so?" He sat with his grimy little forefinger on a

portrait of Napoleon III., and looked at me as eagerly as if it were the end of a fairy-tale he was awaiting.

"Hullo, Dutchy!" called Jim from the doorway.

"Hullo!" answered Rudolph pleasantly, but with the same air of deeply unconscious patronage with which one would pat a dog while thinking of something else.

"Miss Mollycoddle, Miss Mollycoddle!" shouted the other, as he tore away and over the fence.

"He I goes fish with sometime," said Rudolph, as if in explanation and apology for the familiar rudeness of this address.

"He should not speak to you so," I said.

Rudolph grinned. The remarks of young animals like that did not seem to him in any way related to emotional experience.

After he had exhausted both me and himself in historical research, I began asking him about his home; and he brightened again, and told me that he had a little sister, who was "*schön*,"—"You know *schön*, that is better than English word,"—and that she was fair, with hair and eyes like a Christmas doll, and that she loved to ride upon his back. Three years old she was.

"I must go," he suddenly broke out, starting up; "she will want to go ride to our spring; I forget," and he smiled confidentially at me, and then stood twisting his hat, with a sense of needed ceremonial of which he was ignorant. "I much thank you. Oh, yes, I come again. I like it much. *Guten Abend*," and he ducked his black head to me, and then to my mother, whom he saw standing, shining with

benevolence in an inner doorway; then he scurried down the long porch, and I heard Jim challenge him for a race.

"Jim will beat him," said my mother indignantly, from the window to which she had hurried.

The radiant-faced little lad had won our hearts.

I was afraid of growing sentimental about him, and tried to view him coldly; but in truth it was impossible not to feel enthusiasm for such an example of humanity. He revived one's belief in the possibility of the race. I feel now that I might give my tale a greater *vraisemblance* by in some way belittling him, the expedient of inadequacy, but obligations stronger than artistic ones are upon me.

I soon made my way to the despoiled hillside, half-poor village, half-bare woods, where was Rudolph's home. It was a neat little cabin, and I was pleased to find the family all there,—the little Teutonic blonde sister, the work-worn, dust-colored, plain mother, and the big, dark father, with his touch of Latin vivacity appearing and disappearing beneath his gravity.

Rudolph gazed at me, pleased and proud and possessive, possessive of everybody, and silently brought the little passive sister to my elbow, that I might better note her charms.

I sent him off to fill my bottle with water from the sulphur spring, so that I could talk better about himself.

"I think Rudolph is a very remarkable boy," I began; "a very, very smart boy," I added, in my effort to make myself comprehended.

"Yas," said the father briefly, from the doorstep

where he stood, "he iss great,—great here, great here." He touched first his forehead, then his breast.

The mother, who could speak no English, showed by her softening countenance, as she looked at us and then after the boy, that she understood.

"I come to America for he. I know not that he get much good, but I try."

"He 'll be great in himself, anyhow."

"Yas, dat iss so," spoken with tranquil solemnity. "Not many is born dat way as he, *aber*—I wish he get ed-u-ca-tion." The word had been well learned. "He not get much here?" turning a gaze of troubled inquiry upon me. He told me how he was afraid to go now to a place with better schools, for fear he could not find work. He could do no skilled labor. He longed to get Rudolph a place in the machine-shops, but the boy was not clever with his hands. Perhaps he could never rise much above his father unless he got "one ed-u-ca-tion."

I said there was small fear; he 'd find his way to a very practical education; he 'd know many things before he was grown.

The man's face brightened, and he showed his white teeth as he nodded and said a few words to the mother, who nodded and smiled too.

"He ask, ask always," he said.

The small sister now started down the hill, making her legs fly until she met the returning brother, and was lifted on his back, where, when he arrived, she hung, dumb, solemn, and round-eyed as before.

I arranged that Rudolph should come and see me often, and laboriously suppressed my tendency to

make vague promises and prophecies as to his future. Who knew what could or could not be counted upon in this disjointed world?

The captivating thing about Rudolph's mind was the curious absence of any touch of precocity; it was as normal as a blackbird's; all its peculiarity seemed to lie in its superior soundness, reasonableness, and activity; things were real to him; phenomena needed to be accounted for. He was always trying to accomplish the explanation, striking for the roots of things. He had a sleepless desire to find out. His interest in history—it did not, by the way, reach the point of enabling him to derive pabulum from the usual historical classics—was as simple in its way as Jim's in the story of a 'possum hunt; the difference was that Rudolph had the qualities that enabled him to grasp the verity of the larger games, while poor Jim could only comprehend the existence of things akin to his experience.

I tried, of course, a hundred youthful experiments with this delightful mind, and came to the conclusion that it was not an artist's organ; that it was meant for the conduct of large affairs at first hand, not for any plastic or poetic after-interpretation of them. Not that he was without appreciation of such interpretations; on the contrary, he was appreciative of more things than any one I ever knew; he was alive to the interest of every form of mental activity presented to him. He was a choice champion for days in the woods, and would lie silent for hours on the high brinks of those far, fair blue gulfs with which the valleys encompass the mountain.

But he was mastered by the thirst for large know-

ledge of human undertakings. He probably had more actual acquaintance with the mines than had my cousin, the president of the company; and though arithmetic was a painful thing to him, he would enter into computations as to the operations, and by sheer force of reasoning would push his calculations beyond the point of his school-room acquirements.

The chestnuts were brown in their caskets when, one day, one memorable day, I went nutting with Rudolph and Jim. We had two or three hours of the simplest, purest delight, all turned into three harmless young animals, with but one idea in the world,—chestnuts.

There is nothing like some such primitive pursuit to bring the heart close to Nature, for getting past the rhapsodical and wordy state, and becoming one with her; a hundred deep, starved, hereditary instincts are once more gratified. But Nature is an appalling mother.

The place we chiefly haunted was a chestnut grove near the edge of the cliffs; and just here the formation was unusual. The mountain sloped rapidly down toward the valley for a little distance, instead of descending from its full height by the usual perpendicular cliff; but this steep slope broke off abruptly above a straight wall of granite, far below which again waved the delicate crests of the great trees. The turf and small woodland growths extended down the slope nearly to the brink; but before it was reached the scanty soil failed, and at last was the living rock of the mountain-side, dark, unworn by frost or time, now damp and smooth.

In that simplicity of absorption, the pleasure of

which I have been vaunting, I followed a rolling nut (such a big one!) down close to the danger-line,—too close. The slight hold of the mosses and grasses on which I stood gave way, my hand uprooted the bush I held, my feet slipped from under me, and I lay face down on that smooth sloping surface, without a thing within reach to support a child. I kept myself from slipping only by a certain strain of muscular pressure. Below was the gulf, whose far-off depths were filled with the beautiful, visible music of waving branches; above me, the late yellow sunlight shone brilliantly between the dark trunks of other trees, and beneath them stood two white-faced little boys. Rudolph was nearest me,—half-way down the slope. I saw a whole heartful of history take place within him, as I gazed. The first stroke of terror was followed by a heavier, for between the two, in a long second's time, the child found out he loved me. He had never thought of loving me before; rather, as love goes not by thinking, he had been deflected by no pulsation of conscious love toward me. I was a pleasant factor in a diversified universe; I was not the father, nor the mother, nor the little sister. But suddenly, here and now, as I lay there beneath the fair sky, helpless and in mortal danger, Rudolph's heart went out to me; he loved me, and he loved me greatly, with a flashing, backward, heart-bursting realization that I had been good to him. These are many words, but three changing expressions, melting swiftly into each other on the child's ashen face, told it all.

Jim did the best he could; it was useless, but it was all his lights and his gifts were equal to. He

could run, and he ran, far and fast, starting at once, with only a half-choked word and a nod to Rudolph, and taking himself off in good shape, though he was so white.

Rudolph and I were alone, and already my power to cling to the rock was weakening.

I tried to wriggle myself upward; I slipped a very little further down. Rudolph now nodded reassuringly at me, saying in a queer, low voice, "In one minute," as he ran a short distance to where a lot of poles lay cut for some purpose. He came back dragging one. The nearest point to me that offered firm anchorage was where, at one side and somewhat above me, stood a young hemlock in a cleft in the rock. Rudolph selected the spot in an instant, but the distance between me and it was greater than the length of the pole. He immediately stripped off his coarse cotton shirt. Splitting one sleeve in two, he knotted the parts firmly around the tree. He tore a strip off the garment; he tied that, with a loop hanging, just above the butt-end of the pole. By holding to the shirt bound to the tree, he could extend his range perhaps a foot; the loop at the end of the pole gave him a few inches more. He clutched the shirt, put his other hand through the loop and twisted it about his wrist, slipped toward me as far as he could on his knees, and pushed me the pole. Not a moment had been lost. I could reach it, if I caught quick and firm, before I had time to slip, after relaxing my pressure on the rock. There was nothing else to do.

A minute later I sat at the foot of the hemlock, and Death had once more fled into the far dim haze of the

unrealized future, but I was cold with the feel of his breath upon me. It seemed hours before two haggard-faced men rode up on unsaddled, foaming horses.

THAT night, as the household sat around the fireplace, all having with me, I think, a little special realization of life's "human richness like the rose," in contrast to a "cold, abysmal, blank, alien eternity," I said to my cousin, the head of our family, that now he could hardly refuse to listen to my prayer that something be done for Rudolph, that he be given some opportunity.

"I certainly cannot, my child," he replied. "What do you want done?"

"We had better talk to him about it," I said; "he is the wisest person for that question, by all odds. I think if he chooses quite freely, it will be to go to some decent school for a year; then he will know better how to decide for the next year."

"Yes, yes," said my kinsman thoughtfully, looking at Jim, curled up asleep on the floor like a little dog, "I think you are right, that he will absorb knowledge through the pores of his skin. He is a remarkable boy,—undoubtedly a very remarkable boy. Make yourself easy, my little girl; we can't neglect him now," and he patted my head as he rose from his chair.

The next day came the end,—the stupid, meaningless, miserable end. I cannot dwell upon it.

Rudolph was coming through one of the little peninsulas of woodland that here and there invaded the straggling village. He caught his foot in a vine,

staggered against a tree, appeared to regain his foothold, and then sank down. Some boys at a distance saw this, but what was it to call for special attention? They went on.

It seems to have been more than half an hour later that a man coming along the path found the child, dead. He lay under the soft drifting bright leaves, in a pool of blood. He had cut his wrist with a big sharp knife, his pride, which he had open in his hand when he stumbled. An artery was severed; he had bled to death.

By such fantastic fooling did Chance take the life that the day before had been gallantly risked for mine, and so were stilled the heart and brain to whose power I owe all these happy years.

For a decade has passed since, alone in the sweet checkered autumn sunshine, the rarest child, the most hope-stirring human being, I ever knew lay dying. Would that these pages might give some shadowy glimpse of that noble and splendid little figure, and defy ever so faintly and ineffectually the hideous recklessness of the Fate that thus quenched such a life!

He was buried in the small unkempt graveyard on the hill. I have not seen the spot since that winter. Perhaps half a dozen people in the world, within as many years, have remembered that he once lived. Beyond these his memory is faded from the earth, as though he had never been.

THE VILLAGE ALIEN.



N August sun was beating down on Strathboro'. The little town wore a strange aspect. An intelligent bird, coming from afar, and flying over houses, yards, and gardens, might have realized something curious in the look of things.

The square surrounding the court-house and lined with shops was utterly deserted; the shop-shutters were generally up, and the court-house, which had no shutters, showed the need of them in many a shattered pane of glass, which gave it an air of degraded desolation. Both in the square and beyond, grass and weeds overgrew in a disorderly, squalid way, many an unaccustomed spot. The ample gardens behind the houses were oftenest a tangle of luxuriant untrained growths; the asparagus-beds flung out their feathery foliage in great spreading masses, and against them the ironweed and ragweed and Jamestown-weed grew tall and lusty, and among these climbed wild morning-glories. At one side, perhaps, would be a little patch of cultivated ground, where a

few sweet-potatoes and a little corn took up most of the room.

Not a man was to be seen anywhere, but now and again a sunbounneted woman, or several sunbounneted women together, would pass from one house to another.

Inside the houses, or on their shaded galleries, groups—still altogether feminine—were gathered, talking with an air curiously uniting listlessness and restlessness, apathy and anxiety.

The truth was they had special immediate cause for fear, but they had suffered so long and so much in similar ways, that in many the capacity for keen feeling was blunted. Yet they would have told you they suffered none the less because they suffered dully.

It was in 1863. The Federal forces under General Paine were in possession of this part of Tennessee, and he had his headquarters at Tullahoma, not fifteen miles away.

Strathboro' had been well stripped of men for many a day, even the fourteen- and fifteen-year-old boys were away fighting; but until this morning a few male persons were to be seen about, and though usually they were old or sick or deformed, the sight was a comfort to the weary eyes of the womankind. Rightly or wrongly, they now involuntarily felt as never before the superiority of the dominating sex; it was they who were fighting out this war, and even the least awe-inspiring man represented the power that carried Fate in its hand. And now, to-day, here they were, left without a man—a white man, that is—in Strathboro'. No—not literally without one: Uncle Billy Caldwell, aged eighty-two, still sat at

home in his big chair, quivering and bewildered, and Blossier, the Frenchman, was also left behind.

This peculiar state of things was brought about by General Paine in his efforts to stop sudden rebel raids upon his bridges, railroads, and telegraph-wires. These attacks were always made and the offenders gone before punishment could reach them, and, under fresh provocation, General Paine had conceived the idea of holding the few remaining and helpless male citizens of Strathboro' responsible for the doings of the soldiers he could not catch. So, this morning an armed squad had descended upon the disheartened little town, and had marched off to Tullahoma the lame, the halt, and the blind. Falstaff's army was a robust body compared to this handful of mutinous spirits.

Uncle Billy Caldwell was not only eighty-two, but he weighed nearly three hundred pounds; if taken, he was obviously sure to die on the way, and that would inevitably cause some delay and inconvenience, so it was plainly discreet that he be left behind; but as to the Frenchman, there was no logical reason for the leniency shown him; it was simply that the Anglo-Saxon conquerors had, in common with the Anglo-Saxon conquered, so deep a feeling of his foreignness, that he seemed outside of human-kind. The question of taking him to Tullahoma was dismissed with a grin, as it might have been had it referred to one of Uncle Billy's ancient hounds. But old Blossier himself naturally took no such view of the matter. He understood English very imperfectly, but he believed that France was honored in his person; and he had

his ragged straw hat pressed to his bosom as he bowed low to the officer in command, before beginning to express, as best he could, between the two languages, his gratified sense of their regard for *la belle France*, when lo, he raised his head, and officer and men were gone, hurrying, backs toward him, up the street!

Strathboro' people would have considered old Blossier crazy if they had not felt, obscurely, that such an opinion included an admission that he had once been sane, an admission so unthinkable that they contented themselves with explaining everything on the ground that he was a Frenchman.

Yes, he was a Frenchman; that was still clear to even his poor confused brain, though little else autobiographical was. He was not old in years, not much more than forty, but the adjective was more than an epithet, it was descriptive of his relation to life. How he had drifted to Strathboro' he would have found it hard to tell. He had dim memories of barricades and dangers and swelling emotions in his youth, and he cherished them, and around them gathered vague sentiments of patriotism that still stirred within him at the mention of France and of Liberty; but the changes of the years had been too much for his powers of synthesis. He had been hustled through too many and too varied scenes; he could not untangle the coil of memory; he was confused; he gave it up; he lived on from day to day.

For five years he had so lived in Strathboro'. He maintained himself by doing odd jobs of many kinds, nursing the sick, laying out gardens—particularly

flower-gardens — and tending them, mending furniture, painting indoor wood-work, making odd toys — children particularly adored them. In fact, he did all these things and others uncommonly well, else, in this slave-owning community, he would have had nothing to do. He never had much, and the war had not increased his income, but he lived, someway, in the queer little hut he had built himself in a worn-out abandoned field at “the edge of town,” and he had so far redeemed a portion of the exhausted land as to have a flourishing bit of garden at his door, which of course was a great help for the summer. He did not return in kind the good-natured curious contempt Strathboro’ felt for him; no, in his muddled way he was cosmopolitan, and felt for his neighbors a regard that in some cases was almost affection; and now to-day as he stood in the middle of the old turnpike and watched his feeble and saddened fellow-townsmen as they started with their armed escort upon their long hot march, his heart yearned with anxiety for them; he had nursed Mr. Patten through that spell of typhoid fever that had left him so weak; he remembered Jimmy Pembroke’s broken leg, never properly set, and how much walking always started it hurting; he looked up at the lofty head of old Judge Caldwell with pitying awe, and wondered how the soldiers could thus humiliate dignity and worth; but it was when his eye turned back to the hollow-eyed, staring women, hanging over gates, and out of windows, and forth from gallery steps to see the last of the prisoners, that his feelings choked him. He alone was left to care for them.

In after years this whole incident took a humorous tone in Strathboro' traditions, but the comical side of it was pretty well lost sight of at the time. Several citizens, on suspicion of aiding in the depredations of soldiers and bushwhackers, had been shot recently, in that same Tullahoma camp, and now the wrathful general was swearing he would keep his communications open if he had to kill every man along the whole line of the railroad. The sunlight seemed a glare rather than a radiance in Strathboro' that day.

Over the hill the marching men passed out of sight, leaving a faint trail of dust, like smoke, behind them. Blossier went up the street and stopped at Mrs. Pembroke's gate. She was a widow, and Jimmy, whose lame leg Blossier so sorrowfully remembered, was her only son. She sat on her front steps, her gray, disordered head in her hands. Blossier bared his, as he stood there, silent.

"Oh, they did n't take you!" was Miss Catherine's salutation when she finally saw him.

"Non, madame, I rest here for to protect ze ladies. I am rejoyce to aid you of any manière. Zee gouvernement regard my country, *voilà je*—how you say—I is here. Command Blossier, madame."

"There ain't anything you can do," said Miss Catherine, wearily, and she got up and went in the house; she thought it hard that she must be bothered by old Blossy just then.

As evening drew on, Blossier reflected that in the long silent stretch of the night would lie the severest trial to "the ladies'" strained nerves. He put himself in their place, and conjured up what he conceived to be

the fears hovering in their imaginations. His good offices had not been rejected always, during the day. He had helped one woman with her fretful sick child; he had brought wood and water for others who were deserted by their servants;—but what could he do at night?

He was sitting in his cabin, gazing westward into a serene, cloudless, primrose sky; as he got up and turned indoors, his eye fell on a queer, big something in a dark bag in a dusky corner;—he had an inspiration! In that bag was an old viol, a double-bass, a relic of a time, draped in the mists of antiquity, when Blossier had “assisted” in a theatrical orchestra.

Perhaps few instruments are less adapted to the purposes of a strolling serenader than a double-bass, but as Blossier caught sight of his, it was to a night of serenading that he dedicated it. He would systematically patrol the town, and from that double-bass should issue strains assuring the poor ladies that a friend was near and on the watch.

To be sure, as he considered the scheme, he felt keenly the musical limitations of a double-bass. He knew that his was not even good of its kind. He had regretted before that Fate, at the time she made music his resource, had not thrown a more companionable instrument into his hands, but never before did he feel its galling deficiencies as now. Why, a fife would be better!

Blossier felt the picturesque and poetical element in his plan, and that it was odious to be obliged to depend on such means for its execution. However, there was no chance of getting a fife and learning to

play it within an hour, so he soon contrived more optimistic views of the case as it stood. A bass-viol gave forth at all events a very strong masculine sound, well calculated to convey assurances of protection!

He put himself again into his ragged coat, again took up his ragged straw hat, and started forth to inform the ladies of his intentions; there would be nothing comforting in it if in the night that heavy scraping boom took them unawares—" *tout au contraire*," he said gravely to himself.

It was not hard to spread the news; the women were concentrating their weakness for the night; scattered relatives were flocking together to spend it at the most central house of the clan; the women living on the outskirts of the village came over the bridge, or down the turnpike, or up the stage-road as the case might be, to lodge for the time being with neighbors more closely neighbored than themselves. The general trepidation passed the bounds of reason; many Strathboro' households had been exclusively feminine for many months,—yes, years; their natural protectors had been long endangered beyond the chances of this misadventure, but, with a solidarity of sentiment that did them credit, the women all agreed to suffer in kind with those who had special cause for alarm, and uncommon fear prevailed.

Blossier was a little man, a little, thin, dim, hay-colored man, but with so French a face, and of a type so associated in our minds with dark coloring, that it seemed as if he must have faded to his present tints after centuries of exposure to the weather.

The viol was much taller than he was, and of course, after he began his patrol at ten o'clock, he soon found more reasons than sentimental ones for wishing it something else.

On his first round he stopped in front of every door on one side of the street, and boomed forth a few deeply buzzing bars of the Marseillaise, or still more unfamiliar and dislocated strains from "*Orphée aux Enfers*."

He had vague doubts as to the appropriateness of Offenbach, but the jolly fragments he remembered titillated his own Gallic nerves so delightfully after the emotional tension of the song of patriotism and the exhaustion of carrying the viol, that he concluded the ladies too must surely find them cheering.

Some of them confessed afterward that they were comforted by these sounds as of a gigantic bumble-bee in musical practice; others said they were so queer and foreign-like they made them lonelier than before; they fairly "loved" to hear even that old fiddle grumble out an attempt at Dixey, or "Juliana Johnson coming to Town." The night wore on,

And O, how slow that keen-eyed star
Has tracked the chilly gray;
What, watching yet! how very far
The morning lies away!

Mrs. Pembroke, moved by a half-conscious remorse for her daylight ungraciousness, came out to her gate as Blossier stopped there for the second time, and asked him in to have "a dram and a snack."

Pretty Miss Molly Boon called to him once, as he went by her mother's house, and asked him to come in and help her move a sick child. Miss Molly gave him a cup of coffee. The east was gray with the welling dawn when Blossier, weary enough, stopped before the last house at the end of a street,—his bow arm dropped, his eyes fastened themselves on a corner of the house—yes—there it was, fire! a curling spít of flame leaped, vivid in the darkness, around the corner, above the floor of the porch.

The double-bass fell. Blossier ran up the walk; before he could reach the house the sneaking flame had grown bolder, it had fastened itself into the wooden pillar by the wall; he shouted; he threw a stone at the door as he ran; around the corner the fire was bursting up from a pile of débris against the wall; it caught like teeth in the dry clap-boards, the porch-pillar was burning. Blossier ran in upon the blazing stuff; he had torn off his coat and wrapped it around his fists, and he kicked and knocked the brands far out into the gravel walk and the grass. Two women were now beside him. It looked as if the house would go; the little flames were burning merrily,—that meant most of the town would go, for a fine dawn wind was springing up. They brought buckets of water and a ladder, and meanwhile Blossier was whipping the fire with a shovel he had caught from one of them; he contrived to command the women without losing a second; he made them pour water from the floor above; he fought like a fiend; suddenly a memory of the barricades rose clear and

sharp within him as he had not remembered them for years; the spirit of war swelled like a trumpet's note within the little man, and his soul responded to its own cry for the salvation of "*les femmes et les enfants*."

It was a sight to see the alien, old Blossy, in the weird growing light, his life in his hand, his clothes burning upon him, his face scorched and smoke-blackened, fighting, at the close quarters of a death-struggle, an enemy that was not his enemy, gaining a victory that did not save him!

The joyous light was pouring over the summer earth in delicate, elating wavelets when the last flame flickered out, and Blossier fell amid the cinders as if he too were gone.

The crying women — one white, one black — bent over him. The old negress started to lift him, but her mistress caught her arm.

"A'nt 'Cindy," she said, "take his feet," and she pushed the servant aside and stooped herself over the ghastly face.

"Miss Jane," said the other, "I kin tote him by m'se'f. You's too trembly —"

"I'll help tote this man into my house myself, A'nt 'Cindy," was Jane M'Grath's answer, and together they lifted their burden.

"Into the spare room," said she in the hall. Her voice was clear and hard, while her tears, falling like quiet rain on Blossier's face, were making little white blots and streaks there.

In the beginning of the conflict, Mrs. M'Grath had set her five-year-old daughter on the gravel walk by

the front gate, out of harm's way, and told her to stay there. There she still sat, crying lustily.

"Go over after Miss Mary Bell Croft," Miss Jane now commanded Aunt 'Cindy, "and take Janey with you, and leave her there; the children 'll look after her awhile."

As she spoke she was cutting his clothes away from Blossier; his arms seemed badly burnt — she saw this had better be done before he became conscious.

"Do you know the news?" called Mrs. Pembroke to Mrs. Kitchens, across the way, hurrying out to the front gate, while her breakfast was being put on the table. "The town came within an ace of burning to the ground, lock, stock, and barrel, last night. Jane M'Grath's house was afire, and old Blossy—Mr. Blossy I reckon I feel like calling him to-day—put it out, and he got burnt mighty bad. Old A'nt 'Cindy came over hours ago to fetch Mary Bell to come help Jane fix him. They ain't got no idea how it caught. The children, A'nt 'Cindy's grandchildren, and little Janey had been piling up some rubbish 'gainst the wall, making a play-house, and that was where the fire begun. You never can tell what children are up to,—like as not they'd been trying to roast corn or something. There was a right smart south wind blowing early, and if Jane's house had got fairly caught—No, 'Cindy said they did n't think Blossy was burnt dangerous. Yes, you're right; he is lucky to be in Jane's hands. Jane ain't smart, but she's mighty clever. It's a wonder I did n't see the whole thing. I was up and down all over the house most of the night, and I heard that

poor thing scraping and bomming on that there big fiddle of his, all over the town. Yes, it was kind o' company, but I lay down 'bout daybreak, and got to snoozing, after 'while. Mary and little Mary stayed mighty still. I never heard 'em up and down none after eleven o'clock, but Mary says she never slept two hours. But I tell you, a man never has the wife that'll worry over him like his mother. I feel like I'll walk to Tullahoma myself to-day, if I can't find out something 'bout Jimmy any other way," and Miss Catherine wiped her eyes as she turned toward the house, calling "Yes, I'm coming," in answer to a second shrill warning that breakfast was waiting, and leaving Mrs. Kitchens still struggling to get in her account of how she spent the night.

This was about as much impression as the incident of the fire made anywhere : the town had come near burning down, but it had n't — old Blossy had saved it. There was something a little embarrassing about this : it made the usual tone about him seem, just at the time, ungracious ; yet what other tone was there to take ?

Anyhow, Jane M'Grath was taking care of him, and if she wanted help she knew where to ask for it, and — when were the men coming home from Tullahoma, and how were things with them ?

Yes, it was well for Blossier that it was Jane M'Grath's house he had saved ; it was well that it was on her, and not another, fell most directly the debt of gratitude that the whole village owed him, but which the village was too stupid and insensible, too preoccupied and too selfish, to realize and acknowledge.

Jane M'Grath was accounted in Strathboro' a particularly dull woman. Strathboro' cared a good deal for what it called smartness, and carefully classified all examples thereof as either bright or deep; but Jane M'Grath, whom they had known all her life, was, as was well known, not smart, neither bright nor deep, though she was clever,—that is, good-natured, kindly, easy to get on with. Jane was more than good-natured, she was good—good with that positive quality of character that cheapens everything else in this world by comparison; and she was the furthest thing in the world from a fool, she was a wise woman.

Strathboro' did not count the conduct of life among the achievements of smartness, though it valued that too, and gave Jane a certain meed of appreciation as a wife, a mother, and a housekeeper.

Jane put her views of life's duties into no words. She did not think in words; she made about as much use of language as your horse might, for convenience, if he could.

One day, as Blossier, his swathed hands on a pillow before him, sat in a big wooden rocking-chair, in a wide, dim, breezy hall, sunshiny outdoors before and behind him, it occurred to him that he was getting well too fast. Janey, according to orders, was playing on the gallery, within sound of his voice, so that he could call her "if he wanted anything,"—not that Blossier had been known to want anything since he had been in the house.

Aunt 'Cindy's voice, softened by the distance to the kitchen, rose and fell on the pleasant air in reli-

gious fervor; and up-stairs Jane M'Grath's footsteps could be heard. The men had all come back from Tullahoma a week before, but Andy M'Grath was not among them; he had been in the field a year, and two more were to elapse before he should return. Jane felt that the entire weight of their debt to Blossier devolved for the time upon her.

Janey's moon-face appeared at the door—she felt it incumbent on her to come and look at her charge occasionally; then, seized with a sudden impulse, she clambered down the steps, disappeared, and in a moment was laboriously climbing back again, with a very big marigold in her hand. She trotted to Blossier, her bare feet softly patting the bare floor, started to hold it out to him, remembered the swathed hands, and held it up, tip-toeing, to his nose,—flowers were to be smelled in Janey's creed, without petty distinctions as to odors.

"*Merci*," smiled Blossier, as she laid the happy yellow thing on his pillowed lap; "*ne comprenez-vous pas ? Non ?*"

The child stood looking in his face, grave and silent, ready to see what this odd creature would do next.

Jane had come down the stairs, and was standing looking on; at the same moment then and there, she and Blossier each became possessed of an idea—small ones to be sure, but destined to become pregnant.

Blossier's blinking little lashless eyes (the lashes had been white, so their absence made no great difference in his appearance) were fixed on the curl-rags

that tied up Janey's straight brown locks. Jane herself was a simple, plain body, not given to considering the decorative side of life, but she did sorely want curly hair for her child! Blossier's mind reverted to a hair-dresser he had once known in New Orleans—if he only had such a pair of tongs as that man used he was sure he could, when his hands got well, curl Janey's hair to a marvel; and how pleasant it would be to come and do it every day. Vague vistas of usefulness to this worshipful hostess opened up cheerfully before him.

The dear dumb Jane was remembering certain Strathboro' girls who had gone to boarding-schools where they had studied French,—everybody knew they had; it was often mentioned in their honor,—but she had heard some very smart people—Judge Caldwell, for instance—say they did n't believe they could speak it, and Judge Caldwell mentioned that he had Northern kinfolk who got French nurses for their children, so that they learned to talk French when they were little—why (this preface and conclusion came all but simultaneously in Jane's mind), why could n't Janey learn it from Mr. Blossy, and why could n't other children learn from Mr. Blossy (she had a pang here at giving up the hope of a lonely eminence of learning for Janey), and thus Mr. Blossy be lifted to the dignity and prosperity of a teacher! That might indeed be a payment on the debt of gratitude!

Janey looked at her marigold with thoughts of reclaiming it, it seemed unappropriated, unappreciated, lying there on the pillow; and then she heard the

coaxing voice of Aunt 'Cindy's small granddaughter, calling from the big crape-myrtle tree,— she was not allowed to trespass further upon the front yard,— “Janey, Janey, I got a pooty fur ye, Janey,” and she trotted off to bestow her society where it was most prized.

Jane may not have been blessed with many ideas, but she gave profound attention to those that did visit her. She pondered all day on the possibility of Blossier becoming a teacher of French, and after supper she went over to consult Mrs. Pembroke about it.

“Of course,” she said, after she was seated on the gallery in the starlight, and had introduced her subject, “nobody can do much with the war going on, but I 'm willing to make some sacrifices for Janey, and Mr. Blossy would n't expect much; we could just share what we 've got with him till times are better. I 'm afraid he 's been awful pore lately. And after all, the town would 'a' been most burned down sure, if it had n't been for him, sure for a heap more as for me.”

Miss Catherine had no little children to be instructed, so Jane with difficulty and hitches got out so much suggestion of Strathboro's obligations.

“That 's all true, Jane,” replied Miss Catherine cheerfully, “but everybody ain't as anxious to recollect them kind of things as you, and as your mother was before you. I remember now how she cherished that old Mammy Dinah of yourn, just for the way she nussed you when you had that terrible typhoid sickness when you was little. Seemed like

she could n't do enough for that niggah when she got old and wuthless. Good niggah she was, too."

There was a pause, and, just as Miss Catherine was again taking up the thread of reminiscence, Jane interrupted:

"Mr. Blossy ain't a niggah, and it seems kinda dreadful to see a white man live like he does here in Strathboro'. It ain't as if he was a real poor-white either. He 's got education, I 've heard tell. He reads French newspapers. He 's got some now at my house."

"Well, he 's a foreigner, you know, Jane. You never can tell anything about them like other people. He 's been here doing niggah's work years, but it don't seem exactly like any other white man doing it. He 's just a Frenchman first or last, and for them that wants to learn French, I reckon that 's what they want. I s'pose it would be a good thing for the pore old body, but you can't do much, Jane, with the war going on, and the Lord only knows—" then loyalty to disloyalty sealed her lips against the first expression of doubt as to the conclusion and after-tale of the conflict. As to the present she was right. There was small interest in Strathboro' in those days in the acquirement of French by any means whatsoever. Jane accepted this fact and went her own way.

Long before poor Andy M'Grath, gaunt and tattered and despairing and beaten, came back to his home, Strathboro' had become familiar with the sight of Blossier going about his work with a tiny figure by his side—a little girl with the most marvelous double rows of brown curls under her corn-shuck

hat; curls as stiff and slick and regular as if they had been done out of wood with a turning-lathe. Strathboro' admired the curls unanimously, but an accomplishment of their owner filled them with an even livelier interest. That little thing could speak French, talk it right along with old Blossy!

The pair were continually called upon to demonstrate the fact.

When old Mrs. Farnley came in from the country to stay with her daughter-in-law, she was not to be convinced by the ordinary exhibition.

"You, Mr. Blossy," said she, "you go clean out there by that there crape-myrtle, and stay there where I can see you. Janey, you tell Mr. Blossy when he comes back to give me my stick—tell him in French." Janey was a little mystified, but she was used to exhibiting her French, so she successfully performed the feat required of her, and when Blossier, with a bow, handed the old lady her staff, more witnesses than one had a new realization that the strange tongue was not a meaningless jargon.

Andy M'Grath's soul was as much like Jane's as one corn-field pea is like another. The Infinite mind doubtless saw distinctions between them, and Jane knew that Andy took more sugar in his coffee than she did, and Andy knew that she would spank Janey sometimes when he would not, but so far as other human beings were concerned, they might as well have had interchangeable identities. When they got married Mrs. Pembroke remarked to Mrs. Kitchens that it was curious to see two such good, dumb, clever, say-nothing bodies marry each other; but

then, she added, perhaps it would have been more curious yet if they had not.

Of course Andy accepted Blossier in exactly Jane's spirit. He felt a little at a loss as to how to conduct himself with a Frenchman, finding himself without social traditions on that point, but he had the best will in the world to adapt himself as well as he could to any new etiquette required. Neither he nor Jane had a touch of the usual sore contempt for ways new to them—so little may a large spirit be dependent on experience or intellectuality.

Andy had been home a week, and it was the evening after they had first persuaded Blossier to sup with them. Janey, her curls tumbled into merely human tresses, but presumably dreaming French dreams, lay in her trundle-bed; and, close by, Jane and Andy sat at the window, cooling off, and, as they said, "talking things over." Jane now opened up the subject she had had so long at heart.

"'Pears, Andy, like Mr. Blossy 's too good to be doing niggah's work all the time. Of course with a Frenchman things is different, but seems like if he can teach Janey he might teach others."

"It 'pears like it would be more fitting," said Andy, seizing the idea.

"It 's called a smart thing to know French; there 's Babe Tucker."

"Blossy must know all about it," responded Andy again.

"Yes, I heard Judge Caldwell say years ago that he was educated."

"It 's bad time now, Jane."

"I know that, Andy, but we can just try and get him started. The war 's over, and people got to educate their children quick if they 're going to 't all."

"French is extry."

"Well, Blossy 's right here, and a heap of houses beside ourn would 've burnt down if he had n't been. It won't cost much. He 'll be better off, anyhow, than working all the time like a niggah. You talk to your brother Ben, Andy; he 'll like to have his girls as smart as Janey," concluded the self-sacrificing Jane, with a sigh.

TEN years from that night Judge Caldwell was saying to a guest, a lawyer from West Tennessee, "Yes, sir, Strathboro' can show more people, old and young, accomplished in the French tongue, sir, than any town—a larger proportion, sir, so accomplished, than any town in the State. There are numerous children in Strathboro' that talk French with each other together at their play, sir, sometimes. In fact there is a little niggah here about the house somewhere now that I heard saying—you, 'Liza, where 's that pickaninny of yours?" the Judge interrupted himself to call to a servant passing the door.

"She done sleep, jedge."

"Very well, never mind."

"Well, sir, I must let you hear that little darky talk French in the morning. It sounds comic, it does indeed. She picked it up from my grandchildren. Strathboro' always had a literary taste. This

county has produced a large proportion of the great men of Middle Tennessee, Mr. Hunter,—a large proportion even take the whole State together, sir,—and owing to the circumstances I have related to you, a rivalry in the French language and literature sprang up among our people,—ladies and children, that is, chiefly,—till now, sir, almost as many of them have read ‘*Corinne*,’ sir, Madame de Staël’s masterpiece, as are familiar with the ‘*Beulah*,’ or ‘*St. Elmo*’ of our own Miss Evans.”

The Judge spoke truly. It had come about that learning French was the game the town most affected; and Blossier was, of course, the teacher.

The tone about him had not greatly changed; a familiarity with French had not much decreased Strathboro’s sense of the anomalous in the existence of a Frenchman; but the face of life had greatly altered to Blossier. Stimulated by the gentle prodgings of Jane M’Grath he had studied to fit himself for his new calling, and it had come about that he had developed a little genuine simple interest in exercising his few wits, and (bless him !) was enjoying the sweets of the intellectual life.

Moreover, though the tone of the town about him had not much altered, nevertheless its tone to him was necessarily, in the new circumstances, more friendly and considerate, and that deeply touched and pleased the little man.

He still lived by himself, but now it was in “the office,” in Mrs. Pembroke’s yard, and so he was within the pale of civilization, and could be looked after if he fell sick. Jane had not rested till that

possibility was provided for. But Fate is apt to pass over the possibilities scrupulously provided for; Blossier had never spent a day in bed since he recovered from his burns, when one autumn the dear Jane herself sickened and died, and was laid away in that shadow village always growing, growing silently and ominously, by Strathboro's side.

Poor Andy M'Grath was indeed left, as Aunt 'Cindy said, like the half of a pair of scissors. Yes, that was it; he was now a something absurdly useless, unnaturally unfit for existence, a something to provoke the mirth of Olympus.

How strange a thing, still strange in its awful familiarity, that a creature so inoffensive, living in dumb, helpless good faith the life thrust on him, could seem so played upon!

At the funeral, after Jane was laid in the ground and the earth was well heaped over her, Andy turned his poor bewildered pain-dazed eyes upon the faces about him, and amid their wearied assumption of solemnity, beneath which the usual easy little interest in the commonplace was already asserting itself, he saw Blossier, his features working convulsively, as he gazed with eyes that did not see upon the hideous mound.

It was not in Andy to feel resentment against the others; perhaps he too realized, in the depths of his wordless consciousness, that poor humanity could hardly exist except as it is "well wadded with stupidity"; but his heart went out to Blossier, and was eased a little at the sight of his grief.

He went to him and took his hand, and without

a word the two men, the two piteous old children, went away together from Jane's grave.

Months went by, and Strathboro' became used to seeing them together, and had almost ceased to gossip about the queer taste Andy showed, when one June day new fuel fed the flame of popular criticism.

The week before Blossier had overheard one of his pupils, a middle-aged, unmarried lady, say, in his class, to her nearest neighbor, that "it was a plum shame the way poor Mrs. M'Grath's little girls was running wild with nobody but Aunt 'Cindy to look after 'em, and she so old she did n't know what she was doing anyhow," and that it was her "'pinion that pore Miss Jane would rather they had a step-ma than to have 'em left with no raisin' at all like that."

Jane had left four daughters. This little incident gave Blossier food for profound reflection. He reflected to some purpose. That night instead of going and sitting on the gallery steps, after supper, with Andy, as usual, he stopped outside the front gate, and called with a portentous, mysterious air, "Mees-tere Andee, Mees-tere Andee,—*non, non!*" in answer to the invitation to enter, and then he beckoned, still mysteriously, with sidelong, backward nods of the head, for Andy to come to him. "Howdy?" said he when Andy reached the gate, now assuming a light, *déagé* air, totally inconsistent with his previous manner, "come *chez-moi*, these eve-ning."

When Andy was seated on the steps of the "office," Blossier brought him a mint-julep, and with a glass of cheap claret for himself—the one luxury of his prosperity—sat himself down in the doorway.

"Mighty nice," said Andy politely; "get your mint close by?"

But Blossier was so absorbed in trying to arrange his thoughts for presentation that he forgot to answer.

"Mees-tere Andee," he at last began, "your leetle daughtere air-r much upon my meditation. I weis zey have ~~me~~ ^{the} bess condition possible."

Andy stopped with the uplifted glass half-way to his mouth, and began with a troubled countenance to scrupulously study its contents.

"My fater was one *tailleur*, Mees-tere Andee," Blossier inexplicably proceeded, putting his glass down on the step, and talking eagerly with outstretched palms, "and my moo-tere was—was—she make tay, mose delicate wiz fin-gere, *et moi*, me—I help, I help bote when I leetle, when I biggere."

Andy had forgotten his glass now, and was staring and yet trying to look polite and not too conscious of the strangeness of French ways.

"And Mees-tere Andee, my fin-gere also, alway, even now—I sew for my clo'es my-se'f alway, you not know? I know I do ainy t'ing zat way easee, beautiful; and ze *manière*, ze politeness, ah, Mees-tere Andee, you know ze French peepul zey have ze *manière*; I teach ze leetle daughtere all, I keep ze houze, I sew de clo'es, so not in Strathboro' is such clo'es, Mees-tere Andee, *si vous*—peremeet me, Mees-tere Andee, come *chez vous* to your houze,—you comprehend?"

By this time Blossier was standing on the walk in

front of Andy, rapidly pantomiming his ideas, and pleading with gesture as well as voice, as if begging that children of his own should be cared and labored for by Andy. For a moment Andy stared on in silence, and Blossier's heart was in his mouth, then he got up, caught and wrung the Frenchman's hand an instant, dropped it, and turning his back pulled his old soft hat over his face.

Two days later Strathboro' had the enormous excitement of seeing Blossier's household gods—a queer little cart-load they made—moved to Andy M'Grath's house, and behind the cart walked Blossier, carrying our old friend the double-bass.


So was established the oddest household south of Mason and Dixon's line.

It was a year before Strathboro' sounded the full depths of its oddity, and ceased to vibrate with the excitement of fresh discovery. Blossier took completely a woman's place in the household economy, and the world has rarely seen few more touchingly funny sights than that little man sitting cross-legged on the floor of Jane's old sitting-room making feminine fripperies of an unmistakably Parisian character, frivolous and modish, airy and coquettish, to be worn by his favorite, the faithful but stolid Janey. He sits there yet, bald, a little shaky, annoyingly dim of sight, but still enjoying turning out, for Janey's babies now, such dainty confections of laces and ribbons as no other fingers in Strathboro' have ever concocted. Strathboro' has long ago accepted Andy M'Grath's establishment—for Andy still heads it—as one of its peculiar possessions, and takes much

pride in it; and Jimmy Pendleton, who buys goods in Memphis, or one of Judge Caldwell's granddaughters, who is a belle and visits the best people from Louisville to New Orleans, or any of the most traveled residents of the place, will tell you again and again that the fame of its French and its Frenchman has gone abroad as far as west Tennessee and southern Kentucky and even northern Alabama.

Janey only, of the children,—with her husband and her children,—lives in the old place; the rest are married and scattered, and Andy and Blossier seem to depend on each other more and more as the years go by. They never had anything to say to each other, and they have nothing now, but they love to sit side by side on the gallery on summer evenings, or by the open fire in winter, as might two rough-coated, long-acquainted old dogs, and with no more sense of failure of companionship in the silence. Each understands how past and present are mingled in the other's mind, as Janey's children tumble about, night-gowned for their final romp; and each knows the dear figure that as wife or patron saint is ever in the other's thoughts, though Jane M'Grath has been buried so long that even in this small world she is become to others little more than a name on a tombstone; and together these two look forward quite trustfully to the time when their names also shall be on tombstones. And, surely, if there is assurance for the merciful and the meek and the pure in heart, for the salt of the earth in short, as to that veiled and awful door through which poor humanity is always crowding, *they* may be assured.

THE GIRL AND THE PROBLEM.

“T'S a great problem, of course,” said Miss Nancy Randolph Rutledge, folding her hands in front of her portly person, “yet I can but feel that in this case Beulah has chosen wisely. Genius has more rights in some ways, and in some it has less. She should n't feel that she is free to fold her talent in a napkin; she does n't.”

“No, no,” murmured little Mrs. Garner; “but it seems mighty hard, and—and difficult, does n't it? Do you think she minded giving him up very much? They had been engaged so long,” she added apologetically.

“She 's absorbed in her art,” replied Miss Nancy, impressively; “her life is consecrated to it.”

The pair were sitting in Miss Nancy's flat in 97th Street, and the room in itself was a biography. The walls were hung with what Miss Nancy called (and I capitalize according to her sentiment) Ancestral Portraits—five of them, and wonderful things they were. In one corner was a tiny, brown old Érard piano, the first Érard ever made, I should think. It was

still capable of sending forth an odd, pleasant eighteenth-century-like tinkle. Some battered old pieces of silver, a cake-basket and a tea-pot taking the honors, stood in solemn dignity on the elaborate, shiny, new hardwood mantelpiece.

Miss Nancy Rutledge was an elderly and unmarried lady, but if you allow yourself to turn toward her any of your usual slighting and condescending sentiments for spinsters, you are offering her the first patronage she ever received in this world. Miss Nancy, in the kindest, most unconscious way, patronized creation. Never out of the South was an unmarried woman so generally and simply allowed precedence over all matrons as was given Miss Nancy in her own world. It was not that these Southerners loved marriage less,—far from it,—but that they loved intellect more; and intellect was what Miss Nancy tacitly and firmly claimed to have, was supposed to have, and did have, the amount thereof in question declining slightly with each successive step of this statement.

Miss Nancy had come north to live off the enemy amid the prayers and plaudits of admiring friends, and their prayers and plaudits had echoed around her throughout the five years in which she had gallantly triumphed over bankruptcy in New York. In that time she had played many parts: she had written for the papers; had taught mathematics in a school; had assisted in the editorship of a new and impecunious paper devoted, as its title-page stated, to developing the resources of the South; and had given lectures on the history of Virginia in the par-

lors of some rich people who could never forget — though sometimes sorely tempted — that they were born south of Mason and Dixon's line; and of late, in the midst of work upon a life of General Lee, for the Southern subscription trade, she had found a new resource in the care of a small proportion of that army of Southern girls which is now constantly encamped among us. She had three in the house with her, and devoted some attention to several living elsewhere. The office of chaperon suited Miss Nancy; according to her all her girls were lovely, most of them beautiful, — “perfect belles at home,” — and the pleasure of devoting her stores of garnered wisdom to their service renewed her joy in life. She was benevolent, sincerely so, and believed, with a good showing of reason, in her power to guide and instruct humanity at large, and also was humanly susceptible to the charms of appreciation. The very groundwork of Miss Nancy's claims was common sense; you could see that in every line of her matronly figure, and hear it in every note of her pleasant, hearty voice, and in her large-featured face and bright gray eyes common sense was enthroned.

But, contrary to popular prejudice, human beings are constantly rendered unknown quantities by the possession of quite contradictory qualities, and Miss Nancy, to tell the truth, had been subject in her life to a few enthusiasms which left her common sense — sometimes for better, sometimes for worse — far behind. One among those young ladies whom she now called “her girls” was the object of a veneration that must be considered to have had its rise in

the romantic, the higher, side of Miss Nancy's nature. She had known her since she was in long clothes, but not till about a year before this conversation with Mrs. Garner did she honor her with more notice than lay in that general, amiable patronage of which I have spoken, and which she constantly dispensed about her like a perfume — bergamot, say. This girl was, of course, the heroine of Mrs. Garner's speculations, so you already know that she had genius, an art, and a lover — a decent equipment, I take it, for her position as my heroine.

A little more than a year before, Miss Nancy had visited Beulah's mother, and during that visit she had conceived an entirely new idea of Beulah. Beulah, like every other Southern girl at home, was generally — according to the formula — voted mighty sweet, and right pretty, — that is, pretty a little, — but it was only recently that she had developed any special claims to distinction. Now Miss Nancy found that she was an artist, not fully fledged perhaps, — oh, no; to be sure not, — but unmistakably an artist; and to that title, which Miss Nancy gave only to painters and sculptors, she bowed with the most curious and common blind reverence in the world. It would be impossible to exaggerate the simplicity of Miss Nancy's attitude toward these arts; in a word, it was of that familiar sort which feels an oil-painting to be an oil-painting, and a very imposing thing too. Of course Beulah did not make oil-paintings; with all her genius she had not yet arrived at that stage — but let us go back for a moment to the beginning of her artistic career.

When the Baptist Female College of her town added a new drawing-master to its "faculty," several young ladies of society, Beulah among the number, had been moved by the fame of his accomplishments so far to renew their connection with the school as to take a course of lessons from him. Beulah always had had clever fingers; she had done beautiful "tatting" when she was only a little girl, and now she distinguished herself in the drawing-class; she was soon drawing her own embroidery patterns, and beginning her ascent of that pinnacle of fame on which ere long she was to sit enthroned.

She enjoyed this new outlet for her abundant energies, and in the nature of things she enjoyed the new consideration she won. She began to feel a certain tradition-born awe of her own gifts. Her position toward art was exactly Miss Nancy's own; she felt for it, or rather for the name, the superstitious, unsympathetic veneration which some philosophers explain as a result of art's dependence on religion in the middle ages. At any rate, when Beulah found herself making a recognizable sketch of the water-pitcher,—for the new master was very advanced, and insisted on study from the object,—her heart palpitated with the magnitude of the dreams of glory that floated in upon her mind. Then came Miss Nancy. Miss Nancy gazed upon the water-pitcher and the flower embroidery patterns with profound emotion. She urged Beulah to come to New-York and have the best instruction, and finally Beulah came. By chance she fell upon the plan of going to the Art Students' League; and now she

had had one season's instruction there, and was beginning her second year.

Naturally within this year her ideas had undergone some changes, but for the greatest change of all—the determination not to marry Tom M'Grath—the League could hardly be held directly responsible. Southerners have a pleasant reputation for friendliness with strangers, because they so readily suppose others to be “nice people,” various evidences of niceness being more conclusive in the old Southern world than they are at present in New York; but if Southerners do not feel sure that you are of their own kind, if they are even puzzled as to where you belong (according to their remarkably simple ideas of classification), they are little likely to be friendly, not being apt to care for social experiments. All this is but a preface to the statement that Beulah had scant acquaintance with her fellow-students. She thought the young women generally given to queer clothes, and that the young men lacked what she called “polish”; polish in her language meaning—though perhaps she had never thought of it—deference of women. So the dear girl let her social chances for League associations, with all their educational influences, slip by her in the gentlest, firmest little way in the world—in exactly a nice nineteen-year-old way, in fact. She *was* a dear girl, and she showed it in failing to become utterly insufferable under the adulation that now—away from the League—surged around her. This it was that might be said to have brought about the momentous change I have mentioned—this adulation and Miss Nancy's hearty and insistent fostering

of all the dreams it excited. Miss Nancy had just been explaining Beulah's present position to Mrs. Garner. Mrs. Garner was a friend who lived in Beulah's home county, and was now visiting New York.

"She took a great many sketches home with her last summer," said Miss Nancy, "and everybody was astonished. I reckon a great many people felt that it was a great pity to see a girl with gifts like that just settle down into the ordinary humdrum."

"The duties of a wife and mother," began Mrs. Garner, with slightly agitated solemnity — she was very humble with Miss Nancy, but the "ordinary humdrum" was a phrase that provoked even her to turn to the arsenal of platitudes for a weapon. She had it in her heart to try to remind Miss Nancy that the most important offices of life were the very ones she had never been called upon to fill.

But little could she cope with Miss Nancy, who, secretly amused, swam beneficently on with the conversation, wishing to soothe the little woman's feelings, and without the faintest conception of the malice of her intentions—"The duties of a wife and mother are sacred, Molly; but without her art Beulah, though she is a sweet girl, might likely enough be a humdrum person. I don't think she has the feeling for duty that you have, for instance, and that you always had, Molly; but her art lifts her above herself. For a long time she seemed to have less feeling about her talent than her friends did; but I talked to her—I did that much. I would not urge her one way or the other about her marriage, but I wanted her to realize what a great trust a gift like that was,

and to make her choice solemnly. It is n't even as if Tom M'Grath were going to live in Virginia; in Texas she will be out of the way of instruction, and of all those associations that would stimulate her and give her something to work for. And then we know, under the best of circumstances —" Miss Nancy shook her head and sighed. Despite expressed views as to its desirability, in her secret heart she really could but look on matrimony as an abyss that swallowed up many high hopes; in her day she had put such a deal of enthusiasm into teaching girls who — got married.

"So she made up her mind?" said Mrs. Garner, with a suspended inflection.

"Yes; at last. Her pa and ma did n't urge her one way or the other. I think Mrs. Hunt herself would a little rather she had married—she's very conservative, you know; but Mr. Hunt never wanted her to, anyhow, and they both felt the responsibility of the great future there was before her. I reckon she settled it just before she came back." And then it was that Miss Nancy had admitted the harmonizing of woman's development and woman's sphere to be a great problem.

Presently Beulah entered; she was just home from her work at the League rooms, and had a sketch-book under her arm. Mrs. Garner got up to greet her in a little flutter of excitement.

"O Beulah, you've become a great woman since I saw you."

Beulah stooped a little to kiss her, and said serenely, "I'm just beginning, Miss Molly."

"I so long to see some of your wonderful things. You'll show me some, won't you?"

"You are very kind; I'll be delighted to," said Beulah, and, excusing herself a moment, she went to her room, laid aside her coat and hat, ran a comb through the dark curls on her forehead, powdered her face afresh, and then, without loss of time, got out an armful of sketches and studies from the bottom of her wardrobe, and, smiling and polite, walked back to Mrs. Garner. She sat down beside her, drew up a chair to rest the pile upon, and showed them all to her, conscientiously, one by one, telling her in the mean time which were the hour sketches, and which had had a favorable word from her teachers—telling, in short, in the most instinctively calculated manner all the things that Mrs. Garner would understand as reflecting credit upon herself.

"This girl did n't have a very nice complexion, did she?—that's why you've made it so dark and reddish, is n't it?" said Mrs. Garner, hesitatingly, after various half-articulate murmurs of admiration. She could not repress a little automatic effort to find out why these things, which were so much less pretty than the pictures in an illustrated weekly, were so much more wonderful, a fact she never dreamed of questioning.

"Oh, no," said Beulah; "she had a very nice complexion, but the light was not strong on it, and then you see these things are done in such a hurry we only try to get the figure, the action."

It did not annoy her in the least when people did not understand; she liked to explain a little, and she

never doubted their admiration—their admiration of her for making the pictures. She was quite astute enough to feel that the admiration of the things themselves was not always a spontaneous burst; it did not disturb her that many of her friends suffered a little disappointment with themselves over the dullness of their sensations before real hand-paintings; she realized that the tradition of their value remained unshaken.

Mrs. Garner looked at the last drawing, and then leaned back and gazed with emotion upon Beulah—Beulah looking so pleasant and simple behind the collection of her complete works.

“It ’s very wonderful—wonderful,” Mrs. Garner murmured, shaking her head slowly, and thinking of more things than one.

Beulah smiled sweetly.

“And it makes you very happy, does it, dear?”

Beulah detected a thread of curiosity in the question that she resented, but she still smiled as she rose with the works on her arm, and said :

“Yes, indeed, Miss Molly; I could not be happy without my art.” And Miss Nancy nodded her approval.

Life went on serenely in our household for several months after this. Southern visitors continually dropped in, and all, like Mrs. Garner, were treated to a sight of Beulah’s productions. Miss Nancy called for them if no one else did, and she was apt to give an awe-inspiring hint, when Beulah was out of the room, as to the sacrifices the girl had made for her art’s sake. After a while a change began to show in

Beulah; she worked harder than ever, she painted early and late, and she grew more and more silent, and on Sunday, when she could not paint, more and more restless. She was no longer content to hide her story-book in her lap for solace while she dutifully and patiently sat and preserved the look of listening through long chapters of Jeremiah read aloud by short-sighted Miss Nancy.

"I'm afraid, Beulah, my child," said Miss Nancy, solemnly, one morning, stopping and laying her open book upon her lap—"I'm much afraid you are letting your delight in an earthly gift and your love of an earthly art draw you away from your interest in things eternal."

Beulah had been fidgeting from one window to another, after having three times found excuses for leaving the room; now she still stood at a window, and answered, without turning around, "I'm afraid I am, Miss Nancy." But afterward she sat down and remained quiet through the next chapter, though sustained by no other distraction than her own thoughts. To do Beulah justice, she was always willing to do as much through one chapter; that, she said, she had been raised to.

Miss Nancy had not expressed her fears fully. What she said to Beulah was what she said to herself, but down in the depths of her being lurked a faint uneasiness that she did not acknowledge. It was very annoying the way one person and another began to remark that Beulah was not looking well, that she was losing flesh. How could she look well when even after dinner, at home, she got out paper

and charcoal and fell again upon the work that had occupied her all day? Genius, of course, often did burn itself out in that way, but she had always felt that she had reason to hope Beulah was better balanced. She was so far shaken out of her usual noble poise as to protest crossly, several times, against so much work; but one night after one of these scoldings she heard the girl walking up and down in the drawing-room till three o'clock in the morning, and instead of the sense of intolerant outrage with which she would usually have greeted such a performance, an odd forbearance fell upon her. After a month, in which Beulah's appetite and color did not improve, Miss Nancy got a letter in which, among other bits of gossip, she read this: "Mary has had a letter from her nephew from San Antonio, and he says he has heard that Tom M'Grath is courting a girl in Houston; that people think it will be a match."

Miss Nancy's heart lightened; if you will believe it, she thought to herself that now Beulah's pride would come to her rescue, and make her forget a man who had so soon forgotten her. This hope was her first admission to herself of her fears, and you see from it that Miss Nancy had exalted ideas as to the offices and possibilities of womanly pride, and also that she had the usual feminine and profound attachment to the most romantic ideal of constancy—constancy under the most discouraging circumstances—for men. She meditated on how easily and lightly to put before Beulah the base fickleness of the discarded one, but the more she thought about it the less she knew how to do it. If ever

there was an old maid in every fiber of her being it was the hearty, wholesome, large-minded Miss Nancy, and consequently her theories of love and love-affairs were of the most assured, definite, comprehensive character; but there was something about Beulah these days that gave her pause, and for once in a lifetime penetrated her soul with an unacknowledged but dreadful doubt of her own complete understanding of all the mysteries of human life.

Before she found a way to speak to Beulah of Tom M'Grath's lightness, she got a letter from Beulah's mother mentioning the same subject as a hearsay report, and adding that she had written of it to Beulah—why, she did not say, and who knows?

The day that this letter came Beulah did not come home to dinner. It was eight o'clock when Miss Nancy heard the door of the flat hall open, and, hurrying to the parlor entrance with unaccustomed speed, saw Beulah dragging herself wearily into her own tiny bedroom. A feeling of relief was succeeded by a righteous and tempered indignation in Miss Nancy's heart. She had not intimated to the other girls that Beulah's absence was to her unexpected; on the contrary, so far as was consistent with her ideas of Presbyterian doctrine, she had intimated exactly the other thing. She was disposed to maintain something like boarding-school discipline over her girls, and they, she well knew, with their associations, were all too likely to imbibe the odious doctrines of youthful feminine freedom with which the dreadful Sunday papers reeked. She now thought that to go at once and speak to Beulah alone would

be the best way of maintaining discipline. She knocked at the door, and, immediately opening it, found herself face to face with a very white, wide-eyed young woman, who stood in front of her chaperon as if barring the way.

"Beulah, my dear child," began Miss Nancy, in her most sadly serious way, her hands resting upon her stomach, "I cannot feel that this evening you have treated me or my household with the respect that is my due, and I feel that it is for your own —"

"Because I did not come home to dinner?" Beulah broke in, in an unfamiliar, hard voice, and without the slightest apparent consciousness of the rudeness of her interruption. "I beg your pardon; I am very sorry."

"Where have you been, Beulah?" said Miss Nancy, still trying to live up to her standard of an ideal disciplinarian.

"Beu?" Beulah repeated, pushing her hair away from her forehead, and looking through space. "I don't know; oh, I have been walking." She brought her eyes back to Miss Nancy's, and then added quickly, "I had my lunch very late; I don't want any dinner. I have been taking a little exercise in the park."

This explanation was a small concession to duty and decency, to be sure, but Miss Nancy's well-trained ear was conscious of a singular indifference in the girl's tone. She was uncomfortable, she felt like retreating, she did retreat; but not till she had covered that move by saying: "Very well, Beulah, but I don't expect this to occur again; it is not proper con-

duct. I will go and fix you a plate of bread and butter, and make you a cup of coffee, and bring them to you. It is my duty"—raising her voice a trifle in answer to Beulah's impatient wave of protest—"to see that you do not injure your health by your own—your own folly. I shall expect you to eat something."

Miss Nancy's inward sense of weakness had driven her into an irritation uncommon with her. She was now moved to martyr herself to Beulah's bad behavior, and proceeded to arrange the little lunch instead of asking the servant to do it. When she returned with a tray in her hand, she opened the door without knocking. Beulah was seated on the floor with her writing-desk in her lap; she closed it as Miss Nancy came in, but for a moment she did not get up. When she awoke to the demands of courtesy she fulfilled them rather scantily, and Miss Nancy carried herself out with unsoftened dignity. She did not disturb Beulah again that night, although she kept an eye on the girl's transom long after she herself went to bed, and at one o'clock saw the gas burning in that room with the complex emotions of a householder, a guardian of youth, and a good woman who, despite herself, feared that a great mistake had been made, and that she shared the responsibility for it.

During the next week her uneasiness declined; life went on comfortably enough. Beulah worked hard, but she ate her meals and talked to people, and altogether behaved more like a Christian than she had done in a long time.

"Thank heaven! that girl has come to her senses,"

said Miss Nancy to herself, and her complacency as a guide, philosopher, and friend renewed its strength like the eagle. But the week after this did not begin so well. On its last day Beulah came home at three o'clock in the afternoon, a very unusual thing. One of the other girls met her as she came in and exclaimed about her white face. A minute later she heard a heavy fall in Beulah's room, and, rushing in, saw her, looking so pitifully slight and young in her sore trouble, lying unconscious on the floor. When Beulah came to herself she would say nothing to any one. She simply lay there, white as her pillow, with her eyes shut, shaking her head sometimes with a little suffering scowl when she was spoken to. Miss Nancy was absolutely cowed; she was too far gone to put down the little buzz of sympathetic and interested gossip going on around her, for you may be sure these other girls had their ideas of the trouble, though, to do Beulah justice, she had made no confidences, and was temperamentally attached to the dignity of secrecy.

But the time had come when her well-ordered personal reserve was to break down. One of the girls—the one she liked best—was detailed to sit with her, and the other went about her affairs, and when Miss Nancy stole away from the eye of man, the little nurse laid her curly head down on the foot of the bed and broke into sobs. It was a most heterodox thing for a nurse to do, but Beulah opened her eyes, and then held out her arms, and as the two young things clasped each other, she fell into a wild weeping that was the most merciful thing in the world.

"I knew it would come, I knew it, Patty," she cried at last in a loud, strained whisper—"I knew it. I knew I'd suffer like this some time. I did n't at first; I did n't mind. I did n't feel as if I cared about being married. They said I'd be a great artist; I wanted to be, but I knew this would come. I did not say it to myself, but I knew."

After a while she talked a little more calmly, and poured into Patty's small, palpitating bosom a deal of innocent young history.

"We'd been engaged ever since we were nothing but children," she said, holding tight to Patty's hand, and drawing herself toward her, as if she felt that in some way Patty might help her. "He wanted to be married before, but I thought I'd rather be a girl a little longer; and then came the painting, and Miss Nancy and everybody said I'd—oh, what does it matter, what does all that matter? When you are engaged a long time like that you get to think you don't care so much, but it's only because 'way down you care more. And Tom never said a hard word to me; maybe he did n't mind—but he did, oh, he did then. Why should he remember, when I could do such a thing?"

Wide-eyed Patty opened her brave little mouth to speak, and the way Beulah half raised herself, leaning forward with eyes straining to read what she should say before the words were formed, was a heart-sickening revelation of distraught, hopeless hopes of help.

"Tell him, tell him now," whispered Patty; but she was frightened enough when Beulah flung her hand

away, and, burying her face in the pillows, sought to stifle a burst of hysterical cries. When she could Beulah pressed her hand an instant again, but begged her to go away—go away, and make everybody leave her alone.

The next morning when Miss Nancy went in and found her still lying as she had left her, but with open eyes that some way looked as if she had not closed them through all the night, she said that she must send for a doctor. Beulah turned her head, looked at her, and then said very distinctly:

“Miss Nancy, you must not send for a doctor till I tell you to. When I can I’ll see one, if I need; but I have got to manage my own life now. Please leave me alone. Thank you for your kindness.” And she turned her face to the wall.

Miss Nancy could only pulse with an indignation that her other emotions were powerless to override; but she had an indefinable fear of a conflict, and she went away and stayed away. Beulah lay there silent all day. It was after dinner when Patty, going into the dimly lighted room again, heard her speak.

“Patty,” she said, in a wooden, steady voice, “I have written. That’s what’s so terrible.”

“When?” asked the intelligent Patty.

“More than two weeks ago.”

“All sorts of things happen to letters.”

“Not really, not in thousands and thousands of times. Why should he answer me? I knew he would n’t.”

“He will,” said Patty, with the inflection proper to an axiomatic statement.

"Do you think so — do you, Patty?" Beulah, the elder, the genius, the once self-contained, kind mentor of the younger girl, spoke now as if Patty were an oracle of heaven.

Patty was equal to the position. "I know it," she said. Then, as Beulah's eyes besought her for more, she went on: "Probably he was away, and did n't get the letter for some time, and then probably he set in to arrange to come right up North to see you, and did n't think about writing. Men do like that; pa does. Why, maybe he's coming now; or maybe he's gotten here to-night after it seemed too late to call on you, and is waiting till in the morning."

Little did Patty realize, in her infantine castle-building, what she was laying out for herself.

"Do you think so?" cried Beulah, softly. Then she said in a voice more like every-day life, but vibrating with suppressed excitement: "Where is Miss Nancy?"

"In the dining-room."

"No one else there?"

"No," said Patty, wondering.

"Come," said Beulah, getting up and catching at Patty's shoulder for support.

"Oh, you must n't!" wailed the little girl.

"Be good to me now; help me, Patty," said Beulah, starting for the door; and then Patty went with her to the dining-room.

Beulah propped herself against the table when she got there, and Miss Nancy started toward her, forgetting her grievances, and crying affectionately: "My child, my child!"

"Please sit down, Miss Nancy; don't let me give any more trouble than I must. I know I am fearfully selfish now. I can't help it. No, I can't sit down, not now; in a moment. I am going to be more selfish than ever."

Beulah had spoken with self-control, but now her legs seemed to give way under her, and she sat down upon the floor, and with all her effort she could not get her breath without a gasping struggle.

"You 'll think I 'm crazy; so I am, mighty near, but I 'm trying to get hold of myself; I will, Miss Nancy; only do something for me." She was speaking faster and faster, but with breaks and pauses, catching hold of the other woman's dress, after imperiously stilling all effort to stop or lift her.

"Oh, do one great thing," she hurried on; "go to the hotels—and see if Tom M'Grath is here." She bent her face into her hands. "Don't do anything but just that: find out if he is here, and if I know you are doing it, that you 've done it, whether he is or not, I won't lose my mind." Her voice sank in a whisper.

Miss Nancy had already been saying, "Yes, yes, Beulah," and now she lifted her up, assuring her that she would start at once, and Beulah lay down upon the old sofa, where Miss Nancy thought she would get a rest from her own bed. But she had one more thing to ask.

"I want Patty to go with you, Miss Nancy," she said.

"My dear child, I cannot," Miss Nancy began.

"Miss Nancy," Beulah interrupted, "I can't let you

go alone; you can't take Anne if she 's out; please take Patty with you; she 'll be willing to go, I know she will. It 's bad enough to have you go. I 'll never get over the shame of it; how can I stand it if you go alone?"

Just then Patty, who had stepped out of the room, returned, and Beulah appealed to her. Yes; she would gladly go with Miss Nancy.

"Very well, then," Miss Nancy agreed, in a muffled manner, and disappeared. She had gone so far in reversing all her ideas and standards that a little more or less did not matter much; but she was embarrassed at the loss of her own identity.

When she was gone Beulah called Patty to her, and, holding her hand hard between both her own, said: "Patty, you are not to let her—" she stopped and her face flushed—"you are not to let her—let Mr. M'Grath know—if you should find him. You know how a woman would feel, don't you?"

Patty solemnly nodded her whirling young head.

"Miss Nancy does n't," Beulah went on. "She just thinks about what 's proper, and she 's too scared now to care about that, or she would n't go. But I could n't live and have Tom know,—that is, have him think I meant him to know,—you understand. Keep her from—exposing me, Patty," and Beulah sank back upon her sofa.

So you see what faith Beulah put in those views of womanly pride and dignity which we have seen her disappoint.

In a few minutes Miss Nancy, not knowing in her ignorance how wildly hopeless a search she was be-

ginning, started out with Patty into the stormy March night, upon her mission.

With what dignity of mien Miss Nancy quelled the hotel clerks; with what persistence she pursued them; finally with what helplessness she succumbed to the madness of the chase, under the hallucination that by a sufficient display of determination she could force Tom M'Grath to materialize—all this in time came to be recounted by Patty with gusto; but on this night her relish of it was slight, and before they came home, at three o'clock in the morning, she had fallen into a weary, dream-like apathy. From this you will infer, correctly, that their efforts were fruitless. Beulah heard this in silence, and silence she maintained.

Miss Nancy now contemplated the step she dreaded most—sending for Beulah's mother. But here again she was paralyzed by fear of the girl's stubborn resistance, and dread of the effect opposition might have on her. Never before had Miss Nancy viewed self-will—outside of herself—as aught but something to be righteously and immediately put down; never before had she doubted her power to put it down in any one subject to her authority legally or spiritually. Now her soul was full of darkness. The next morning while she was lying down, and Patty was sleeping, the door-bell rang, and the servant brought a telegram to the girl who was in the parlor pretending to study, but who was really reveling in bewildered, sympathetic, delighted speculation upon the household tragedy. The telegram was for Beulah, and she carried it to her, pleased with the chance of entering

the forbidden chamber. Beulah did not answer when she rapped; she went in, and Beulah did not stir till she heard the word "telegram"; then she sat up and tried to open it, but it fell from her shaking fingers; she picked it up and tried again; she could not command the clever little hands whose skill had wrought her all this woe. With an effort she held out the envelop to the other girl. "Read it," she said.

In a twinkle it was open, and she heard these words:

"Been on ranch. Am coming to you. On road now. TOM."

"Thank you," said Beulah, with sweet civility, taking the telegram. "I am so much obliged; a telegram is so alarming, you know, and then it's always nothing at all," and she smiled, though her breath was coming a little hard, and nodded a polite dismissal.

In half an hour she came out of her room, clothed and in her right mind, and sought Miss Nancy. Kissing her cheek, she said:

"I feel very much better, Miss Nancy. I am so sorry for all the trouble and anxiety I have given you. You've been so good—I shall never forget. Is Patty up? Poor little Patty, I must go speak to her." Then from the doorway: "I've just had a telegram from Mr. M'Grath, Miss Nancy. He's on his way to New York," and she disappeared.

And then Miss Nancy at that late day learned the real aptness of the worn old phrase about being torn by conflicting emotions.

Between this time and that of Mr. M'Grath's arrival, Beulah, after all her storms, found herself moved to sit down over her sketches in tender contemplation of the glories she was foregoing, the glories of personal aggrandizement, though she never thought of putting it that way. In the secret chambers of her mind the phrase about "all for love and the world well lost" reiterated itself with a pensive, sweet personal application, and she sighed occasionally out of the fullness of her joy of sacrifice.

Meanwhile she was missing her classes at the League; but it happened, for a wonder, that her name came up between two of her teachers there, in a private discussion of their sorrows.

"Life would be more cheerful," said one young man, "if being D. F.'s did n't seem to insure their turning their attention to art. They undertake it not only when they 've no eye, and no feeling, but with broken matches for fingers."

"I don't think those are the worst," said the other. "They don't get out into the light to do much harm. I hate 'em worst when they 've got the fingers and nothing else, and are ready pretty soon to help fill the maw of the Philistine. There 's that Virginia girl I pointed out to you—Hunt 's her name, I believe. She has n't an atom of talent, or even real intelligence about art—no color, hopelessly bad in her drawing, but she 's got a sort of superficial facility." And he went on condemning Beulah, whose self-satisfaction had roused his ire, to a life that he declared below an honest washerwoman's in dignity.

When Mr. M'Grath arrived, before he had been in

the parlor twenty minutes, he wanted to take Beulah out walking,—to the puzzled vexation of the ladies who had vacated it for the lovers' convenience. Beulah came to the dining-room where the household was assembled, as self-possessed as ever, and asked Patty to go with her. Miss Nancy could only snort feebly, so cowed was she by all that had passed; and when Beulah said that Tom was most anxious to meet her, though he was in something of a hurry just now, and that he hoped to see her in an hour or so, when they all came back, she put on a mollified air, and counseled Patty to go.

While they were putting on their hats, Beulah said, as she carefully adjusted hers, and, with her eyes on the mirror, stuck in a long pin:

"Patty, I don't think Miss Nancy would be quite so horrid as to tell Tom anything,—to talk to him about things, you know,—do you?"

"N-o-o," said Patty, staring at the face in the glass; "I 'm sure she would n't."

"I reckon I 'll just not give her much chance," said Beulah, abstractedly, as she put on her gloves.

When they returned Mr. McGrath was introduced to Miss Nancy. He was a tall young man with a firm-set mouth, pleasant dark eyes, and a broad soft hat.

"Now I 'll return the favor," he said, when his acquaintance with the lady was properly established; "I 'll introduce you to my wife. Sit right down here, Miss Nancy. You must n't lay it up against her if you think we have n't treated you just right. It was n't her fault. You know you 've got a mighty

lot of influence over her, Miss Nancy, and the truth is, I was n't right sure it all worked my way,—yes, I know,—and I was n't right sure she 'd find me as valuable in the hand as in the bush, so I just insisted that we get this business fixed before we said anything to you about it. I feel bad about the pictures, too, Miss Nancy. I know you were right about all that,—I know you were,—but, you see, we 'd gotten ourselves into a tangle before we knew she was a genius, and it was too late —” His voice dropped into a sad little affectionate cadence as he fixed his eyes on the floor. Then he looked up at Beulah. “I can't say I 'm sorry, Miss Nancy, but I 'm willing to be a little sorry for her, and I 'll lay out to make it up to her as far as I can. If she can paint any in Texas, she shall.”

Beulah smiled, and as she smiled she sighed a little sigh.

THE END.

